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No. 377.

{ COMPLETE. }

FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 34 & 36 NORTH MOORE STREET, N. Y.
NEW YORK, February 15, 1890.

{ PRICE }
10 CENTS.

Vol. 1.

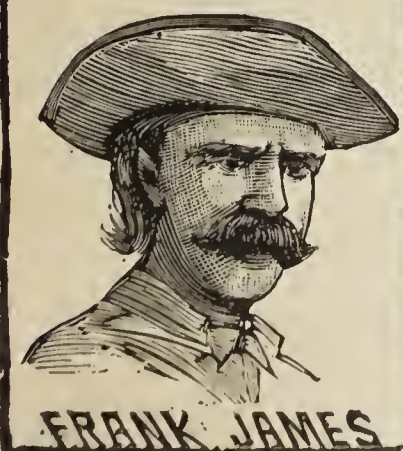
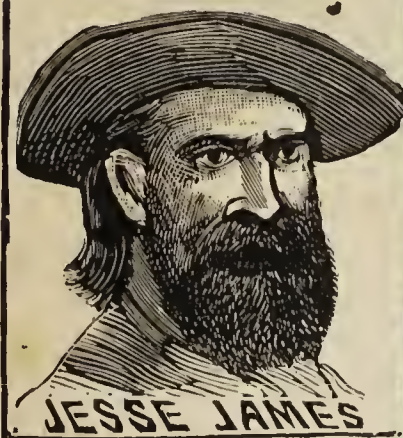
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OR,

FIGHTING OLD KING BRADY.

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THE JAMES BOYS IN NEW YORK: OR, FIGHTING OLD KING BRADY.

By A NEW YORK DETECTIVE,

Author of "The Churchyard Mystery; or, The Old Sexton's Clew," "The Haunted Churchyard," etc., etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

A GENTLEMAN FROM ARIZONA.

"I've just got in from Arizona."

"What?" remarked the brassy-looking clerk behind the desk.

"I've just got in from Arizona," repeated the short, slender, shabby man, who stood on the other side peering through the little window, which was so arranged as to prevent any possible customer from seeing the face of the brassy clerk; but as it afforded them a capital view of his flaring red necktie, which must have cost him at least a quarter, even if bought on Catherine street, customers, as a rule, did not complain.

"Scratch—scratch—scratch!"

Evidently the brassy clerk was very busy writing.

No other answer was vouchsafed.

In attempting to see above the necktie, and ascertain whether his positive statement, repeated now for the second time, had been heard or not, the gentleman from Arizona attempted to thrust his head through the window, which, being of too small circumference by several inches, only resulted in sending his big, white cowboy's hat flying back upon the floor of Slapman's express office, which the majority of Brooklyn people know is situated on the lee side of Bowling Green, on lower Broadway. We presume that everybody knows that Bowling Green is not the largest public park in the city of New York.

The gentleman from Arizona muttered a gentle—we should say prayer—picked up his hat, and returned to the charge.

This time by dint of stooping a little and ele-

vating the angle of vision, he was able to catch a glimpse of the brassy clerk's nose.

"I've just got in from Arizona."

"Don't care a button if you've just got in from Halifax," the lips of the brassy clerk were heard to say. His eyes as yet remained undiscovered, awaiting the advent of some venturesome Stanley, who might be possessed of sufficient courage to force his head entirely through the window at the risk of never getting it out.

"Young man, you're sassy."

"No, I'm busy. I've told you so twice before."

"Hain't there no one in this office what's got time to attend to customers?"

"I'll take a day off and find out, if you say so. S'pose you call round next week."

"You'll attend to me now, b'gosh!" cried the Arizonian, in a tone which plainly showed that his stock of patience was expended at last.

At the same instant a singular sound made itself heard at the little window.

It was a sound not only singular but startling, reminding the brassy clerk of the cheerful methods of "Buckshine Bills," "Cross-eye Petes," and other border heroes, and suggesting the propriety of looking down at the window.

He did so and beheld to his horror a cocked revolver in the Arizonian's hand.

"Say, hev ye got time now?" asked the man.

"Y—yes!" stammered the clerk.

"I kinder thought ye had. Wal, I'll put up the gun. Mehbe you'll get busy in a minute or so. Ef ye do, I'll trot it out agaln."

The revolver disappeared from the window.

Nor was it longer necessary.

The brassy clerk was all attention now.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"I want you to take a trunk from the Erie road over to Brooklyn. You run a Brooklyn express, don't yer?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"Well?"

"The trunk."

"What trunk?"

"My trunk, consarn yer. Do you want me to trot out the shootin' iron agalu?"

"You'd better not."

"I may if you don't keep civil."

"Where is your trunk?"

"Told you onct. At the Erie depot."

"Got your check?"

"Yes."

"Where is it?"

"Here."

And the gentleman from Arizona laid the bit of brass down upon the window-ledge in a way which showed that his angry passions had been by no means appeased.

"3144!" called out the clerk. "All right. What's the name?"

"Cohnschaster."

"Cornplaster?"

"No, sir. Not Cornplaster, Cohnschaster! Cohnschaster!"

"All right. Now then, Mr. Cornshyster, where do you want this trunk to go?"

"It goes to No. 989 Buffalo avenue, near Crown street, Brooklyn."

"Thunder! Never heard of Crown street. I know every street in Brooklyn, too."

"Wal, it's thar."

"Sure?"

"Of course. You've heard of Buffalo avenue, is it?"

The brassy clerk had heard of Buffalo avenue and he was instructed to inform his driver that in case he drove along that thoroughfare far enough he would unquestionably come to Crown street for the excellent reason that there the avenue ended and he could go no further if he tried.

The charge was then paid for, and the gentleman from Arizona with an odd chuckle withdrew.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon on a certain day in January when this interview took place at the office of Slapman's express.

A little later the brassy clerk picked up the bit of brass and walked to the other end of the office.

"Hey, Dick Wells! Where's Dick Wells?" he asked.

"Here I am, Mr. Budd."

A trim, handsome young fellow, roughly dressed like a driver, looked up from a pile of packages which he was examining in a corner of the office.

Evidently this was Dick Wells.

"Dick, I want you to take this check to the Erie and get the trunk. It goes to 989 Buffalo avenue, near Crown street. Know where that is?"

"I can find it, Mr. Budd."

"I suppose so. Attend to it."

He tossed the check to Dick and walked away. Now Dick Wells did not relish the order.

Buffalo avenue he knew to be in a remote part of Brooklyn—a good hour's drive from the South ferry. It was late already—it would be very late when the trunk was delivered—more than that it was going to snow.

Not that it made much difference to Dick when he drove the horse into the stable and tumbled into bed with his day's work done.

For Dick was one of those unfortunate fellows who had no home to speak of.

He was an orphan, and received just pay enough to keep soul and body together.

Not one of your dime novel orphans either, with a rich father to turn up in the last chapter.

By no means.

Dick's father had been only a poor carpenter, and Dick himself had buried him. His mother had died before his recollection, and as for brothers and sisters, he had none.

Life taken altogether had thus far been a pretty dreary business for Dick Wells.

There was a small load for Dick's wagon that night.

After he got the trunk from the railroad station, he returned to the office and found that there were only two or three other packages for his route.

These went near the ferry, and after they had been delivered Dick started on his long road with nothing in his wagon but the trunk.

He had not proceeded far before he noticed that a hack was following him.

It had already begun to snow, and the night was consequently very dark, but Dick was still able to recognize the hack as one that he had seen on board the ferry-boat, and while on the boat he had also observed that the hack was identical with one which he had observed standing at the Erie ferry when he took the trunk. It caused him some slight uneasiness to remember also that this same hack had followed him all the way down Broadway.

Thoroughly familiar with city ways, the presence of this hack behind him struck Dick as a little strange.

It was bound over the South Ferry—the one he had taken to cross to Brooklyn—why had it

not passed him while he made his stop at the office?

Moreover, why had it not got beyond his sight while he stopped to deliver the parcels?

Here were two things which Dick could not understand.

"It can't be that they are following me on purpose?" he thought.

But after a little it began to look so.

Block after block was covered, and still there was the hack behind him. Dick began to feel more uneasy still.

What was in the trunk?

All he knew was that it had been tremendously heavy when he lifted it on the wagon.

Nor was he any better informed as to who was inside the hack.

Putting this and that together, Dick began to feel that he would be glad when the trunk was safely delivered at its destination, and he gave the old horse the whip.

This, however, seemed to make no difference.

The faster he drove, the faster the hack followed. Still, the distance between them never seemed to increase.

All this time it had been snowing hard.

"I must know what this means," thought Dick, and he turned out of Atlantic avenue into a side street, thinking to take Herkimer street, which would lead him to Buffalo avenue just the same.

The change did not mend matters.

Before he could turn into Herkimer street the hack had rounded the corner of Atlantic avenue, and when he had driven perhaps a block along the former thoroughfare, there it was behind him again.

Now it seemed quite evident that it was following him, but still Dick did not know what to do.

By this time he was at no great distance from his destination. Almost unacquainted with the part of the city in which he found himself, he could think of no better plan than to push ahead and get rid of the trunk as soon as he possibly could.

But it was necessary to get back to Atlantic avenue before anything else, for Herkimer street was roughly paved, and the snow had made it well-nigh impossible to drive rapidly, for it concealed the holes, and every now and then down would go the wagon, lurching first one way, then the other, the trunk bumping about on the bottom in the most reckless sort of way.

Wheeling round the next corner he came to, Dick drove back to the avenue, which in those days—it was before the present steam railroad was built—was a broad macadamized boulevard. Here he found the going better, but on the other hand he caught the storm full force. The wind, sweeping over the vacant lots on his right, blew the snow-flakes into his face with blinding intensity; they froze around his ears, his eyebrows, and even fastened themselves to his incipient mustache, while as for his hands, they had now become so cold and benumbed that he could scarcely hold the reins.

Not a soul was in sight.

Now this part of Brooklyn is almost as solidly built over as any New York street; then it was a wilderness—a howling wilderness on that night, and no mistake.

It was no longer possible to distinguish the sound of wheels, and Dick had to look behind him to see if the mysterious cab was still following.

He had but a moment to wait before he saw it come sweeping round the corner, the closely-muffled driver on the box lashing the horse to greater speed.

"Great guns! what shall I do?" thought poor Dick. "They are after me as sure as fate. If I

could only see a policeman I might speak to him."

Urging up the horse, he kept a sharp lookout from side to side, but it is quite needless to say, saw no policeman.

He might just as well have looked for a nugget of gold as for an officer of the law in the wilds of Brooklyn on a night like that.

By this time Dick Wells had become pretty thoroughly scared.

Still he would not give up.

Fear told him to go back.

A natural stubbornness of purpose urged him on.

"I've started to deliver that trunk, and by gracious, I'm going to do it," he muttered. "Hold on, I'll take the bull by the horns and try another dodge."

Dick's plan was bold if not a wise one. He stopped short, and, leaping out of the wagon, began fooling with the harness.

He wanted to see if the hack would go past.

"If they are after me, I may as well have it out with them first as last," he reflected. "The further I go the lonelier it will get."

He was right.

Opposite to the place where he had stopped was a solitary building—a "gin mill" Dick called it, though where its patronage came from seemed a mystery. Behind the screens lights were burning, and in case of an attack, Dick made up his mind that he would make a break for this place and appeal for help.

Meanwhile he kept his eyes fixed on the hack.

On it came, laboring heavily in the snow.

As it drew near he could see the driver lean back and look down toward the little window behind as though some one were speaking to him inside.

When it came abreast of the wagon the horses were reined in.

"Hello, boy!" called the driver.

"Hello!" responded Dick.

"Is this the road to East New York?"

"Yes. Straight ahead."

"How far is it?"

"About a mile."

"Are you bound that way?"

"Yes," replied Dick, for he wasn't.

"What's the trouble—broken down?"

"No; one of my bald backs is broke."

"Can I help you?"

"No. I've got a spare one. I've just put it on."

Now we don't pretend to defend Dick in thus lying. We only give the incident just as it occurred.

The driver here gave the horses the whip and the hack went laboring on, soon disappearing in the darkness and storm.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Dick. "I was mistaken, after all."

But, just as he got on the wagon again, he found himself wondering why the hack had followed him round into Herkimer street, and all his suspicions returned.

He now drove along more slowly. The hack had passed him at last, and if he could only make Buffalo avenue and slip into it unobserved he felt that he was safe.

It was not far ahead—four or five blocks at the most Dick reckoned it.

He had covered three, and still nothing was seen of the hack.

Just as he reached the corner of the fourth street, however, he spied it standing in the shadow around in the other street.

Dick was badly startled.

He saw by the sign on the lamp-post that this was Buffalo avenue, but he instantly resolved not to turn into it, and he was just about to drive

past when two men suddenly rose up before him directly in his path.

One seized the reins and pulled the horse to a standstill, while the other, leaping up upon the wagon, thrust the cold muzzle of a revolver full in the face of Dick Wells.

CHAPTER II.

THE CAPTURE OF DICK WELLS.

"Young man, I've got business with you!"

Thus spoke the man who had leaped upon the express wagon driven by Dick Wells.

It would be useless to attempt to deny that Dick was scared—horribly scared, but the climax had come, and he was glad of it. Now he would know the worst.

"What do you want?" he chattered.

"Several things, and I propose to have them all."

"Do you mean to kill me?"

"Not if you are sensible."

"Take that thing away from my face and I'll try and be sensible."

"Sensible already, by thunder!" laughed the man, lowering the revolver. "You Brooklyn boys ain't as soft as I thought."

"What do you want?" repeated Dick, doing the best he could to keep up his courage.

"Where did you get that trunk?"

"You ought to know—you've been following me ever since I took it on my wagon."

"How do you know that?"

"I have got eyes, I guess. Are you going to steal it?"

"The trunk—no. We don't want the trunk. Look here, young man!"

"I am looking," retorted Dick.

He was looking the man full in the face, in fact, and he saw nothing there to reassure him.

The man was large and powerfully built. He wore a heavy black beard, and had a great deal of hair which hung long down about his shoulders.

There was nothing in his heavy features to impart to Dick one ray of hope.

Nor was the fellow who held the horses' head more prepossessing.

He was tall, thin, and clean shaven. His features were large and his eyes deep set; his face wore a solemn aspect which would have been almost comical seen under different circumstances. There was, however, nothing comical about it just then to Dick.

"Well, what do you think of me?" asked the man, sneeringly. He seemed to be amused at the puzzled expression which had come over Dick's face.

"I was thinking that I had seen you somewhere before."

"Tain't likely."

"Perhaps not."

"I'm sure of it."

"What do you want to waste time chinnin' with the kid for?" growled the solemn-faced man.

"Why don't you get to work?"

"Keep your shirt on, Frank, I'm runnin' this here business," was the half angry retort.

Then the man on the wagon turned to Dick again, adding:

"Now then, youngster, about the trunk."

"What about it?"

"Who does it belong to?"

"Dunno."

"Where are you taking it?"

"None of your business."

"Be careful!"

Just here the revolver appeared again.

There was no help for it.

Dick glanced about in desperation, but could see no prospect of getting help.

"Answer my question!" snarled the big man.

"I'm taking it up this street, if you must know."

"I intend to know. How far up?"

"989."

"Name?"

"Colinschaster, or something like that."

"Is that the name, Frank?" demanded the big man

"Sounds like it. Never knew his full name."

"Most likely it's all right."

"Wouldn't wonder."

"What shall we do? Open it here."

"Not much. I'm dead set on revenge. I'd rather have it than the dosh."

"Me, too. Suppose we let the hack go and keep on with the boy?"

"That's my idea, Jess."

"Frank—Jess!"

Dick Wells suddenly became seized with an odd suspicion.

Like most boys, Dick was fond of reading, and he was particularly fond of reading of adventures which were somewhat exciting.

Where had he heard these names, Frank and Jess?

Where but in connection with the doings of the far-famed James Boys, the Missouri outlaws, then in the height of their career.

But pshaw? The idea was too absurd for even a moment's consideration.

The James Boys were in Missouri, and Missouri not within a thousand miles of Brooklyn.

Dick almost laughed at the thought, when suddenly it occurred to him that the face of the big man beside him looked marvelously like a picture he had once seen of this self-same Jesse James.

He was, however, given no time to ponder upon the matter.

"We'll do as you say, Frank," cried the big man. "Come on."

"Say, you ain't goin' to steal my wagon?" cried Dick, in terror.

"Now, looker hyar, youngster," said the big man, "you just take my advice and hold your jaw. You are in our power, and we don't never allow no one to tell us what we are to do. If you keep quiet and mind your own biz, no harm will come to you; but if you so much as raise your little finger to show fight, you'll hev to take a dose from this hyar pill-box, and will find yourself a dead boy just as sure as a gun."

The argument was conclusive.

Like Davy Crockett's coon, Dick came down at once.

"Better chuck him off anyhow," growled Frank, as he left the horse and climbed upon the seat at the other side of Dick.

"What for?"

"What good is he to us?"

"Now, looker hyar, Frank, jest you remember that we hain't to hum now; we're in a city."

"Don't look much like one, then."

"All the same it is, and what's more, it's a city where we ain't acquainted. Better be careful."

"Oh, have your own way. You always do."

"And I always intend to. Boy, drive on."

There was no help for it.

Dick took up the reins and guided the horse around the corner.

As they passed the hack the man addressed as "Jess" shouted to the driver:

"Hey! We don't want you no longer!"

"All right, boss," was the reply.

Then the hack was immediately turned and Dick could hear it rolling heavily off through the snow.

"Just keep right ahead and mind your business!" growled Frank, as he attempted to look

back after it. "You've got all you want to do that."

And Dick thought so too.

Now for a while not a word was uttered.

Dick was gaining courage, but he was completely in the power of these two men. He did not see what he could do except to implicitly obey their commands.

Not a house was to be seen, scarcely a light, for the lamp-posts had now disappeared, and they were passing between two high banks formed by the cutting of the street through a hill.

"Denced lonely place this," grumbled Frank.

"Boy, have we got much further to go?"

"I can't tell you. I was never here before."

"There don't seem to be no houses."

"No."

"How be you going to tell the number then?"

"If the house is here I guess we'll come to it by and by."

"Shouldn't wonder. You're a right smart one, now, ain't you? What's your name?"

"Dick Wells. What's yours?"

Both the men burst into a hoarse laugh.

"Shall I tell him, Jess?" asked Frank.

"I don't care a button whether you do or not."

"Then I'll do it. Locker hyar, Dick Wells, I'm Frank James."

Dick almost jumped out of his seat.

"Not the Frank James!" he cried.

"Yes, the Frank James. You've heard tell of me I kinder guess?"

"I should say I had, but I don't believe you."

"You might as well. It's so."

"Are you Jesse James, then?" stammered Dick, turning to the man on his right.

"That's what they call me when I'm to hum. Don't fall to pieces now. I'm a man anyhow. I won't bite."

"I ain't afraid of you," retorted Dick. "At least no more than I was before."

"Was you afraid before?"

"Yes."

"You didn't show it then. Say?"

"What is it?"

"Does drivin' pay?"

"Not very well."

"Dick Wells, I've took a notion to you. What do you say to—"

"Now you just shut up your head, Jess!" interrupted Frank. "You're always and everlastingly takin' a notion to some young squirt or 'nother, and you know blamed well the trouble it's got us into. I say it's played out."

"Look out, Frank! Don't you rile me. Guess I'm of age."

"And soft as mush on the subject of good-lookin' boys, like you always was."

"What d'yer say?"

"Guess you heard."

"You just say it agaln, and by—"

"Hold on!" cried Dick, for matters were getting just a bit serious. "Ain't that a house ahead?"

It certainly had that appearance.

At least, there was a light.

It was burning upon the top of the bank on the left, and as the wagon drew nearer it was discovered to be in the window of a small building—a mere shanty—which could only be approached by a long flight of wooden steps leading up from the street.

Whether or no his companions were actually the famous outlaw brothers Dick could not tell, but he instantly determined that this must be the house at which he was to deliver the trunk.

"That's the place," he said, emphatically.

"How do you know?" demanded Jesse.

"It must be."

"Why?"

"Don't you see the street ends down there? We can't go any further."

"By Judas! the boy is right," said Frank. "Now, then, what's to be did?"

"Hush," whispered Jesse, "let's listen if any one is stirring."

For a moment all sat motionless, but no sound could be heard.

"Do you really think it's the place, bub," persisted Jesse.

"I do."

"But there ain't no way of driving up."

"Does that make it any the less the place?"

"Of course not," growled Frank. "Jess, don't be such a blasted idiot. Some one's got to go up there and reconnoiter; shall it be you or me?"

"Guess I'll go, brother. You stop here and keep an eye on Dick Wells."

Suiting the action to the word, he climbed down from the wagon and hurried up the steps.

"Boy!" whispered Frank, as soon as he had departed.

"What?" asked Dick.

"You don't look like a fool."

"I should hate to think I was one."

"Then just you understand one thing—keep quiet, say nothin' and saw wood."

"I don't know what you're driving at."

"Perhaps you'll find out before the night's over. Jess an' me hev got business here, and we can't go prowling round in the snow; nyther did we want to keep that hack driver to play the spy onto us—that's the reason we took up with you."

"Well."

"How much do you get for drivin' this wagon?"

"Ten dollars a month."

"Ten dollars a month? Great grief! Is that all?"

"And my board."

"Anyhow, it's bad enough. Looker hyar, you just do as we want yer to do and arsk no questions, and when we quit company to-night, I'll give you a hull year's salary and the horse and wagon shan't be hurt."

"All right," rejoined Dick, resolving inwardly that he would under no circumstances take the man's money.

"I knowd you was sensible from the first minute I laid eyes onto you," pursued Frank, "and that's the reason—hello! Here comes brother back again!"

Jesse now came hurrying down the steps toward them.

Dick found himself more puzzled than ever. He began to wonder what it could all mean.

"Hey, Frank!"

"Hello!" answered Frank.

"There ain't nobuddy thar but an old Dutch-woman."

"The deuce you say! Sure, Jess?"

"Yes, sure."

"Then we've been fooled."

"Mebbe not. Mebbe he ain't come yet."

"Tain't likely. I'm dead sure he spotted us on the train."

"I tell you what."

"Tell it."

"Let the lad take the trunk up all reglar and we'll pop in after."

"O. K."

"But I don't want to be mixed up——" began Dick when Jesse interrupted him so savagely as to show that his fancy for the boy was but a passing one after all.

"You do jest as you're told to do, unless you want to get stiffened out," he hissed. "Get out of the wagon."

Dick got out.

"Take that trunk off. Here, I'll help you."

"Say," interrupted Frank, "hadn't he better go up first, and inquire if it's the right place?"

"And give us the shp? No. Not by several jugsful. Take the trunk up the steps, Dick Wells, and be pretty danged lively about it, too."

And Dick did it.

It was a good lift—about all he cared to tackle. Though he could not very well look around with the heavy trunk on his back, he knew perfectly well that Jesse was following him. When he got to the top, there he was at his side.

"Knock on the door," he whispered.

Dick rapped hard upon the door.

For a moment there was no response, then presently came a woman's voice, shrill and quavering, calling out:

"Who is it?"

"Express!" cried Dick. "I've got a trunk."

There was a shuffling, followed by the rattle of the bolt; in a moment the door opened, and an old wrinkled crone, with a cast of countenance decidedly German, thrust out her head.

Jesse, meanwhile, had stepped back out of sight.

Dick threw the trunk down upon the threshold with a sigh of relief.

"Bring her in, bring her in!" piped the old woman, speaking with a strong German accent. "You tink I lifts dot drunk, huh? I'm eighty-three already und vill soon be eighty four."

"Say, will you tell me what the number of this house is?" interrupted Dick.

"Hein! Dis house ain't got nicht number. Dot's all ride, dot's all ride. You schast bring in dot drunk."

"Not till I'm sure it is the right place. What's the name?"

"Cobuschaster is mein son's name, but he don't live here already yet."

"Oh! If Cornshyster don't live here then the trunk belongs somewheres else."

"Nein! nein! dot drunk he belongs here to mein son."

"Thought you said your son didn't live here?"

"He nicht lib here, but he gomes here—de drunk gomes here, too; pring her in! pring her in."

"Is your son here now?"

"No."

Dick had prolonged the conversation, hoping that the contrary might prove to be the case, and the owner of the trunk might appear and take the responsibility off his hands.

And yet he dreaded to see the man.

He had not forgotten the threats the two men had uttered against him.

In case he should appear there was likely to be a pretty hot time of it, Dick thought.

"Vy you no pring her in?" persisted the old woman. "Don't I tells you it's all ride. Off you don'd pelieve me, I shows you a letter from mein son written by dot Gansas City already—dot is, I would show him to you, can nicht read der Deutschen. Pring in de drunk! Pring in de drunk!"

"Take the trunk in, the lady is right," added a deep voice from behind.

And Jesse now stepped out into the light thrown through the open doorway. He had heard all he cared to know.

It was no use.

There was nothing for it but to obey.

Dick now shouldered the trunk and carried it inside the shanty.

When he dropped it upon the floor, had straightened himself up and looked behind him Jesse was not to be seen.

He had not gone far, however. Only to speak to Frank in the wagon.

But Dick did not pause to reflect how far he had gone.

He felt sure that he would be on hand in a minute, and honestly tried to do his duty in the time thus given him.

"Say, masses," he whispered, hastily; "that feller's a thief. He means to steal something out of this trunk, and he's layin' for Mr. Cornshyster. There's another of them outside."

The old woman gave a scream of terror.

"Tief—tief! Gott in himmel! Vot I do?"

"I don't know I'm sure. If there was only some way of getting help. How far is your next neighbor?"

"Mos' ten blocks."

"Perhaps I can sneak out and——"

"No, you can't, nuther," spoke Frank's solemn voice in the doorway. "Now, looker hyar, young fellow, you'll try that game jest onct more and you'll swallow that thar lead pill."

Dick drew back and was silent.

He could scarcely have made himself heard if he had tried, for the old woman was shrieking like mad.

"Hold your jaw. If you don't quit that squaking I'll shoot you, you blessed old witch!" roared Jesse. "Whar's your son?"

A torrent of German expletives was the sole reply.

Jesse sprang toward the woman, and seizing her roughly by the shoulder forced her down into a chair.

"Where's Tom?" he hissed. "Where's your son?"

"He is nicht here."

"But he's coming hyar to-night."

"I don't know noting about it."

"You told the boy just now that you had a letter from him. Where is it; I want it right now?"

The faintest trace of a smile appeared upon the old woman's wrinkled features.

She fumbled in her pocket, produced a letter and handed it to Jesse without a word.

"Deuce take it—it's in Dutch!" snarled the outlaw. "How the mischief be I going to read them fly tracks?"

"Haw, haw, haw!" laughed the solemn Frank, who seemed to regard the thing as a huge joke.

"Shut up your head!" remarked Jesse. "Do you want to have the hull neighborhood down onto us? Read this, old woman."

"Nein? Nein!"

"Read it, or I'll shoot you!"

Out came the everlasting revolver again.

But Mrs. Cohnschaster's German obstinacy was proof against the threat.

"Nein! Nein!" she repeated.

It was all she would say.

"Bah! You can't make her read it, Jess!" growled Frank, "and if she did she wouldn't read it right. Mebbe the kid can read Dutch."

"Can you?" demanded Jesse, turning to Dick.

"No," said Dick.

This was another falsehood, but, perhaps a pardonable one.

It so happened that Dick's mother had been a German, that the boy's early life had been passed entirely among people of that nationality.

Dick Wells could read German just as easily as he could English, and he could speak it too.

"Pshaw! There's no use in wasting any more time," snarled Jesse. "If Tom comes, well and good. Meanwhile let's open the trunk."

"How are you going to do it?"

"I'll find a way. Mebbe there's an ax in the shed behind here. I'll go and see."

He stepped to the door leading to the rear of the shanty.

As he did so, Frank bent over the trunk and began to examine its fastenings.

It was but a cheap affair. Dick could see that there would be not the slightest difficulty in breaking into it.

Presently Jesse returned with an old hatchet and thrust it into the boy's hands.

"Open the trunk," he growled. "I want you where I can keep on eye on you. You may as well do the work."

It was no use to refuse, for Frank and his revolver stood ready.

Dick thrust the blade of the hatchet under the trunk lid, and in a moment had pried it up.

"It's all right," said Frank. "Here's Tom's old coat."

"I know'd it," answered Jesse.

The trunk, in fact, seemed to contain little beside old clothes. These Jesse tumbled about hurriedly, revealing in a moment two big stones,

"Thunder and lightning! the stuff ain't here!" he exclaimed.

"It must be!" cried Frank, in tones of dismay.

"But it ain't. He's snaked it out and put them stones in place of it."

"I tell you it can't be. How would he get the chance?"

"Mebbe he never put it in at all, but sent it some other way. Mebbe the trunk was only a blind."

"Looks like it."

"Deucedly like it. Thunder and guns! Whar's the old woman?"

"Where, sure enough?"

So busy had the brothers been over the trunk that they had failed to observe her.

Now that they came to look round, she was gone.

"Did you see her go?" demanded Jesse, turning furiously upon Dick.

"No."

Now we are sorry we can't make our hero perfect, but it is quite impossible. But Dick Wells was neither better nor worse than most boys.

Under ordinary circumstances, he was entirely truthful, but under such circumstances as these, he saw no harm in lying, and lie he did.

He had seen the old woman rise and slip out through the back door, but he had not said a word, and he had not the least intention of saying a word now.

"You lie!" roared Jesse, striking him across the face. "You wretched little pup, you did see her! Which way did she go?"

"Out!" snapped Dick, retreating into a corner.

Jesse would have followed him up, had not his brother seized him by the arm and pulled him away.

"Stop it!" he cried. "You fool! Do you want to make matters worse?"

"But the boy knows! He must know!"

"Why must he any more than you or me? Jess, we're dished. The best thing we can do is to git."

"Not till I've had my revenge on that blasted traitor, Dutch Tom!" hissed Jesse, "and the time has come for that!"

No explanation was needed.

As the words were uttered the door opened, and a man came staggering into the shanty so much intoxicated that it was all he could do to stand.

Dick Wells gave a slight exclamation of surprise, while Frank uttered a cry of half-suppressed rage.

"Hist, brother!" breathed Jesse. "He's our game. Keep cool!"

In truth the man might have been anybody's game, for to say that he was as drunk as a lord don't half express the case.

He was a short, thick-set, Dutch-looking person, wearing a big white cowboy hat and rough clothes, so thoroughly besmeared with mud as to suggest the possibility of his having recently awakened from a nap in the gutter.

"Hello, Jess! Hello, Frank!" he exclaimed,

staggering forward with extended hand. "Been bursting open my trunk! Ha, ha, ha! Good joke, ain't it? Followed me all the way from Missouri to get left at last!"

"What have you done with the money, Tom?" asked Jesse, with enforced calmness. "You'd better own up if you want to avoid a row."

"Gosh dang it all, I ain't afraid of you!" cried the man. The brassy clerk at Slapman's express office would have instantly recognized him as Mr. Cohnschaster, the gentleman from Arizona. "It's dog eat dog, Jesse James. You ain't in Missouri now, but in Brooklyn. If you dare——"

He pulled out a revolver and leveled it unsteadily.

Perhaps he meant to use it—probably he must have done so if he knew the outlaw as thoroughly as he seemed to—and there is no telling what the results might have been if Frank had not leaped forward and caught his arm.

"Bang! Bang!"

In an instant two shots rang out inside the shanty.

There was one man down now.

It was Tom Cohnschaster!

Had Frank turned the revolver upon him, or had he in the scuffle turned it upon himself?

Dick was at a loss to tell, it had all happened so suddenly.

He had seen the scuffle and heard the shots.

Then the next he knew the gentleman from Arizona lay bleeding upon the floor.

Just then Dick Wells would have given all he ever expected to be worth in this world to have been free to make his escape from the shanty.

But this was not to be thought of.

He had been captured by the James Boys—those terrible James Boys, whose daring crimes were the talk of the whole country.

Between himself and the back door stood Jesse. On the road to the front door lay Cohnschaster's body with Frank bending over it.

Dick Wells did not dare to make a move.

CHAPTER III.

OLD KING BRADY RECEIVES A VISITOR FROM OUT WEST.

"WELL, sir, what can I do for you?"

Old King Brady, the world famed detective, leaned back in the comfortable swing chair in his private office and faced a white-faced, nervous appearing gentleman who had just been shown in by the clerk.

"My name is Hart, sir. Joseph Hart. I am from East Meridian, Missouri," replied the man, showing by the nervousness of his manner that his face told the truth.

"I am at your service, Mr. Hart."

"You are Old King Brady, the detective?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am cashier of the First National Bank of East Meridian."

"Indeed."

"Yes, sir. Probably you are aware that our bank was robbed of over one hundred thousand dollars a few weeks ago?"

"No, sir."

"What! Can it be possible?"

"Never heard of it."

"You don't say. I thought everybody knew it all over the country."

"New York is a busy place, Mr. Hart, and I am particularly busy myself just now."

"But this robbery was committed by parties in whom you are interested."

"Indeed."

"Can't you guess who I mean?"

"I'm a poor hand at guessing. Do you refer to the James Boys?"

Mr. Hart bowed, glancing nervously about the

office as he did so, as though expecting to see Jesse James spring out from under the desk or leap from the closet, revolver in hand.

"Yes, I mean the James Boys," he whispered. "Look here, Mr. Brady; those fellows completely got the best of me."

"How so?"

"They hung me up in broad daylight."

"Literally or figuratively?"

"Oh! figuratively, of course. They came into the bank, planked a cocked revolver at my head and cleaned out the vault."

"The old story."

"True; but that don't make it any the more interesting for me."

"Probably not."

"Who covered you?"

"Clell Miller."

"Ah! I remember the rascal. Frank and Jesse did the stealing, I suppose?"

"You've hit it."

"The exact amount taken was what?"

"One hundred and fifteen thousand and some odd."

"Cash or securities?"

"Almost all cash. It was our regular supply, and some funds which had been sent in to meet a railway contractor's note, due next day."

"A bad business for you, Mr. Hart."

"So bad, sir, that it will ruin me if the money is not recovered," replied the cashier, moved to tears in his earnestness. "I have been given two weeks to get back the money by the board of directors. If I don't succeed they will send me to State prison. You see I make a frank confession to you, Mr. Brady. I'm in a desperate fix and want your help."

There was no mistake about the crying business now. Mr. Hart had pulled out a handkerchief which showed signs of long use, and was wiping his eyes.

"But my good sir," cried Old King Brady, sympathetically, "how can the bank directors send you to State's prison? You could not reasonably be expected to put your life in jeopardy. Were you armed?"

"Oh, no."

"Faith, if I were a Missouri bank cashier, I should want a cannon behind the counter."

"No, no. You don't understand. Jess is my cousin, and——"

"Hello! You mean Jesse James?"

"Of course. He's my cousin and I never thought he'd hang me up, don't you see?"

"No, I don't see what that has got to do with the proposition of the bank directors to send you to prison unless they think you had a hand in the robbery."

"Well, I didn't."

"You'd better explain if you want any advice from me."

"I'm going to. I've come here to throw myself on your mercy, Mr. Brady. You're the only detective in the United States who ever succeeded in getting anything back from the James Boys. If you can't help me no one can. I heard about your doings in the Knobnoster bank business, [told in 'Old King Brady and the James Boys,' No. 359 of the NEW YORK DETECTIVE LIBRARY] and I immediately felt that since Jess and Frank were in New York, that you would be the man——"

"What?" interposed Old King Brady. "Are the James Boys in New York?"

"They are."

"Can it be possible?"

The old detective was roused now, and we must admit that he looked a good deal concerned.

And he had reason

Old King Brady had not forgotten his adventures with the James Boys.

He was not likely to forget them, for he carried in his side one of Jesse's bullets still.

Nor had he forgotten the threat made upon that memorable night in Chicago.

"Beware! We'll follow you to New York and do you up yet, Brady," Jesse James had said.

Was it possible that the time had come when the reckless outlaw meant to make good his word?

"Come to the point, sir, come to the point," cried Old King Brady. "What have you done to lay yourself liable to the law?"

"Why, I lent Jesse money on his note," stammered the cashier.

"Nothing criminal in that, sir, nothing criminal in that."

"But that is not all. I thought Jess would pay me—he swore he would, but he didn't."

"Ah! And then?"

"Then," continued Mr. Hart in a low tone, "I altered the books to make it appear that the note had been paid."

"Humph!" muttered the detective, "I begin to see. You are a defaulter, it appears."

"Yes, sir, my sin has found me out. Unless you help me, I am a ruined man."

"I suppose that in the general overhauling which followed this robbery this business was discovered."

"Yes, sir."

"Why didn't you light out?"

"I—I couldn't, sir. My family—I have a wife and six small children. Then I went to Jess, and he promised to pay me."

"Never trust a bad man, Mr. Hart, even if he does pretend to be your friend. Sooner or later he is bound to turn on you."

"So I've found," replied the cashier, sadly, "so I've found. But, you see, I believed in Jess. Everybody in our part of the country admires his courage and bravery."

"The people in your part of the country are very peculiar."

"How so?"

"Here we don't make heroes of thieves and scoundrels."

"I suppose not. But then, you see, Jesse James has a big pull in our State."

"If I can once put my paws on him I think I shall be able to show him that I've got a big pull too. Do you mean to tell me that you actually went to him and asked him to give you back enough of the stolen money to make good your defalcation?"

"Yes, sir. If he'd a-had it I'm sure he'd done it. When he's flush Jesse James is an almighty liberal fellow, I want you to understand."

"Liberal with other people's money. He knocks me on the head and steals all I've got, in order that he may be liberal with you. That's your Missouri morality, Mr. Hart. We don't do things that way in New York."

"I've understood that all New Yorkers were honest men," replied the cashier, dryly.

"It ain't exactly that—but no matter. My notions and those of the average Missourian will never agree. Let's get back to business. You say Jesse refused to give you back any part of the money stolen from the bank?"

"That's just what I'm trying to get at. He couldn't give me the money 'cos he didn't have it to give. One of his band had turned traitor and walked off with the whole thing."

"Well, well!"

"It's so."

"How was it done?"

"Well, I didn't have a chance to find out. Jess was in a big hurry when I seen him and wouldn't stop to talk. All I know is that it was done while he and the rest of the boys were at a dance."

"The name of this man?"

"They called him Dutch Tom."

"Did he get all the bank money?"

"Every cent of it."

"Where is he supposed to be now?"

"Either in New York or on his way here."

You see he belongs in Brooklyn and the money was put in a trunk and sent to the station. That's the way Jess got onto it, and he started for New York straight, taking Frank along with him."

"And you?"

"I started too. You see the directors told me I must see Jess and get the money, or they'd go for me. If I can get the whole business I'm to be president of the bank, if I get half they will let up on me, if nothing they'll lock me up."

"If you go back?"

"Oh, I shall certainly go back in any case."

"Even to go to Jefferson City?"

"Even to go to Jefferson City. If I didn't I'd break my word, and a Missourian never does that."

"But they're mighty fond of breaking into other people's cash boxes."

"Do you mean to insult my State, sir? Do you mean—"

"Pardon me. I should not have said it."

"But you did say it."

"I was thinking of the James Boys."

"It would be just as well if you were to think of them a bit. I had another reason for coming to see you, Mr. Brady."

"I dare say; I think I can guess what it was."

"I'll be dogoned if I think you can."

"Dogoned! That delightfully expressive word," thought the detective; "how it reminds me of the days I spent in Missouri!"

"I'm quite sure I can guess it," he added aloud.

"Let's hear you try."

"You have heard Jesse threaten me."

"That's it. How did you know?"

"Guessed it."

"Wal, You are some at guessing. Yas, Jess swar to me that he'd come to New York and shoot you at sight."

"I'm not a bit afraid, Mr. Hart."

"Wal, you don't 'pear to be. I should."

"Perhaps you wouldn't if you'd been shot as many times as I have."

"Shot at, you mean?"

"No, I don't. I mean shot—hit with bullets."

"Great grief! How many times have you been shot?"

"It must be as many as a dozen."

"And never killed?"

"Well, no. I can't say that I was ever killed."

"Of course I didn't actually mean to ask you the question, I was only exclaiming like."

"Of course, of course; but don't let us waste any more time. Let me go over the ground once more. You are in a fix, the James Boys are in New York, there is something over a hundred thousand dollars floating around somewhere that you want me to get."

"That's it, that's it."

"And who is going to pay for all this?"

"The bank, in case you succeed. They have authorized me to offer you five thousand."

"And in case I fail?"

"Then I suppose I shall have to stand the expense."

"Which means that I get nothing?"

"I'm afraid that's about the size of it."

"Very good. I owe Jesse James something. I'd like to pay the debt. I accept the terms on one condition."

"What's that?"

"It is that you go to some quiet hotel and remain there until you hear from me. Furthermore you must promise me not to attempt to en-

ter into any negotiations or hold any communication of any kind with either of the James Boys yourself."

"I agree to that."

"Now a few important questions. Can you give me any clue to the particular place in New York where the James Boys would be likely to put up?"

"No."

"Nor to the whereabouts of this man—Dutch Tom?"

"No."

"Do you know his real name?"

"Jess said it was something like Cornshaster and that he lived in Brooklyn."

"And that is all you know?"

"Absolutely all."

"Very good. Where are you staying?"

"At the Astor House."

"Leave it at once and take a room at Wilton's Hotel, Third avenue near Forty-second street. Tell them I sent you and they will treat you well. Be here to-morrow afternoon at six o'clock and I'll try and see you. If I am not here on time to the very moment don't wait. Come again on the following day at the same hour. That is all."

Mr. Hart felt himself dismissed, and bidding the detective good-day, hastily withdrew.

"Well," muttered Old King Brady, rising and shaking himself, "I feel like a man who has undertaken a big contract. The James Boys in New York, eh? It would be the proudest day of my life if I could snap the handcuffs on them. Well, well, I'm on my own ground this time. I must get to work and we will see what we will see."

"Yes. I must get to work at once," he reflected, "and first of all I want a cab."

The cab took the old detective whirling across the big bridge to Brooklyn, and set him down at police headquarters then in Washington street.

"I want to see Captain Caffrey," said the detective walking up to the desk.

Captain Caffrey was at that time Chief of the Brooklyn police.

The sergeant at the desk was most polite.

The chief was out it seemed, but the sergeant knew where he was and would send for him. Wouldn't Mr. Brady as good enough to walk into the private office and wait.

Mr. Brady would and did, and presently the captain put in an appearance, looking just a little as though he might have been sociably engaged with some prominent member of the "Brooklyn ring."

"Ah, Brady, is it you?" he exclaimed. "My dear fellow, what can I do for you?"

"You can tell me where in this big city I can put my finger on a man by the name of Cornshaster?"

"Cornshaster, Cornshaster. Don't know any such person. Is he a crook?"

"Yes."

"What's his line?"

"He has been until recently a member of the noted James Boys gang, of Missouri. Among them he was known as Dutch Tom."

"Dutch Tom! Dutch Tom! Seems to me I have heard of him in connection with something here, but it's a long time ago. Just wait a moment and I will see."

The captain hurriedly left the room, returning presently with a big record book.

"Here it is," he said. "We turn back ten years and find a Dutch Tom arrested for sand-bagging a man near the City Park. Upon his trial he gave the name of Cohn."

"Probably that's the party."

"It looks that way. Want his description?"

"Yes."

"Height five feet eight; thick set, light hair

blue eyes, flat nose. No peculiar mark. Speaks excellent English with the New York twang. Was born in Erfurt, Germany, but came to America at the age of three. Sent to Crow Hill for one year. Discharged in nine months. Has not been seen in Brooklyn since that time."

"Where did he live at the time of his arrest?"

"With his mother in a little shanty on the old Hunterfly Road. He was a widower with two children. Ah! here we have it! A note states that the woman's true name is Cohnschaster. Probably this is your man."

"Not a doubt of it, captain, and I'm a thousand times obliged."

"Don't mention it. Always happy to serve you, Brady. What is it? An important case?"

"Very. Bank robbery in Missouri. One hundred and fifteen thousand dollars taken."

"You don't say so. Do you want help?"

"Not now. If I do I'll let you know."

"You shall have all you want."

"I am sure of it. Can you direct me to the Hunterfly Road?"

"Oh, the Hunterfly Road don't exist any longer. Wait a moment. I'll call up the captain of the New Brooklyn precinct on the telephone. He may give us a few points."

"Is it out New Brooklyn way?"

"Yes; Weeksville, Buffalo avenue, away down by the Flatbush line."

The telephone, for a wonder, worked splendidly that night, in spite of the snow storm which had already commenced.

Back over the wires came the information that an old woman named Cohnschaster lived on Buffalo avenue, near Crown street, in a small shanty which stood alone near "the old lamp-black factory," whatever that might be, on the top of the hill.

Bidding the captain good-evening, Old King Brady re-entered his cab and was presently moving over the same road taken by Dick Wells earlier in the evening, as fast as the ever increasing snow would permit.

Before he had reached the corner of Bedford and Atlantic avenues—a little more than half his journey—an accident happened.

The cab broke down.

It was a bad break, and one which it was simply useless to think of repairing. Neither was it possible to procure another cab in a region so sparsely settled.

The result was that the detective was obliged to take to the horse-cars, and after a long, cold ride he found himself standing at the corner of Buffalo and Atlantic avenues, the scene of the attack upon Dick Wells.

"Thunder, but this is a lonely spot?" he muttered. "Once before I remember being here, but it was in the day-time. I suppose there's nothing for it but to push straight ahead."

He had not gone far before he saw a horse and wagon coming toward him quite rapidly.

In spite of the darkness the detective discovered that there was no one in the wagon, which had the word "Express" painted on the side in large letters.

It flew past so quickly that he could not see the name of the express nor the address. He tried to stop the horse, but stumbled in the snow and missed him. Before he could recover himself it was too late, unless he wanted to indulge in a chase, and this he felt that he had no time to do.

Now he pushed on, and at length came to the shanty, his attention being attracted by the light, and also by the sound of loud voices talking within.

"That must be the place," he reflected, "and there's more than one man in there."

He crept up the steps and had gained the top of the porch, when, suddenly, two shots rang

out upon the night, the report being followed by the sound of a heavy fall.

"Murder! Murder! Ach, mein Gott, dey've killed him!" wailed a voice just in front of him, and the detective was startled at seeing a bare-headed, wrinkled old woman, bent with age, rise suddenly from the snow.

CHAPTER IV.

DICK WELLS MAKES A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

INSIDE the shanty all was now confusion.

"Great snakes, Frank! What'd you want to do thet ar fer?" snarled Jesse, springing toward his brother, with rage flashing from his eyes.

"It was an accident, Jess."

"Blame your accidents! Now you've got us into a sweet hobble. Tom dead! The money not in the trunk! Frank, you're a cussed fool!"

"Keep your remarks to yourself, will you?" growled Frank, stooping down over the body of the wounded outlaw. "He ain't dead yet, not by a jugful."

"No, but he's mighty near it—I kin tell. Tom, Tom! What did you do with the money? Speak up, man! Tell it before you die!"

A look of fiendish malignity crept over the paling face of the dying man.

"You—will—never—know, Jesse James!" he gasped.

Then his eyes closed and his breath seemed to stop.

Suddenly the eyes opened again, and raising one finger he pointed to Dick Wells.

"The boy!" he stammered. "I want to speak to the boy!"

"Speak to him!" roared Jesse. "Find out where the money is if you can!"

He caught Dick by the shoulders and pushed him forward.

Then followed a few words of conversation, which we cannot give exactly as they were spoken.

And this for an excellent reason.

It is expressed in the disgusted exclamation of Jesse James.

"Gosh blame it all, Frank, the blasted shoat is talking Dutch.

"Speak English!" he shouted.

But the dying man never looked at him.

"You know me, boy?" he had said in German to Dick.

"Yes, yes."

"Kate—see Kate. It was the money they were after that I gave her. Tell her to keep it—tell her to hide it. Little Kate! poor little Kate! She shall be a lady—Oh, God, have mercy on my soul!"

That was all, and it was all in German, and Dick understood every word.

He was amazed, dumfounded, and he trembled.

He knew where the money was now, and though he had not the faintest idea of the amount, he felt it must be large to bring the James Boys all the way from Missouri as it had.

Would the knowledge cost him his life?

That was just what Dick Wells was afraid of.

He rose from his knees and stood facing the brothers as white as a sheet.

"Gosh! I really believe he's croaked!" cried Frank, who had been standing on the other side of the prostrate man.

"Not a doubt about it, you consarned idiot!" snarled Jesse. "He's dead as a woodchuck. Now, then, boy, what did he say?"

"He spoke in German. I—I didn't understand him!" faltered Dick, to gain time.

"You lie! You did! Tell it, tell it, unless you want to go his road!"

"I didn't!"

"You did! You did! Look out now! I'm going to shoot! One—two—"

"Bang! Bang!"

"Ten thousand devils! I'm shot!" roared Frank.

"Old King Brady, the detective!" burst from Jesse's pallid lips.

"Up hands, boys! I've got you!" shouted a stern voice at the door.

It all happened in the same breath.

Bang! Bang!

Bang! Bang!

Bang! Bang!

Dick Wells, scared out of what little sense he had left, fell down upon his hands and knees and made a bolt between the legs of the tall man, who just then sprang into the room, firing as he came at Jesse and Frank, who were in full retreat by the rear.

"Stay where you are. Don't you dare to move!" cried the tall man, but he kept right on firing as he came, and Dick kept on, too, almost knocking down old Mrs. Cohnschaster who stood outside the front door, crying and wringing her hands.

"Schtop—schtop! Murder! Tiefs! Polliss—polliss!" she screamed, seizing Dick by the coat.

He wrenched himself free and rolled down the entire flight of steps before he knew it, landing in the snow at the bottom dazed and half stunned.

Bang—bang!

Bang—bang!

Back in the shanty they were firing still.

Was the tall man, who had so suddenly burst in upon them, actually Old King Brady, the famous detective?

The very thought of it made Dick tremble.

Like most city boys he had a holy horror of falling into the hands of the police; but this was not all. He knew where the money was, and he wanted to act upon that knowledge before anything else.

Dick scrambled to his feet and looked hastily about.

He had hoped to find the express wagon waiting where he had left it, and had meant to leap in and force the old horse to his utmost speed.

The wagon, however, had disappeared.

"Godfrey! Now I am ruined!" thought Dick. "Slapman will kill me. The old horse must have got tired of standing here in the snow and started for home."

This—we may as well mention it right here—was precisely what had occurred. It was Dick's wagon that Old King Brady had met. The horse was on his way to the stable then, and he got there safely, although it was more than a mile away.

Dick stood and listened.

On top of the hill behind the shanty he could hear shooting. Just then another shot was fired, and then all grew still.

Yet Dick hesitated.

"I wonder if she came out here?" he muttered. "I'll bet a dollar she did. Mebbe she's over at the place she told me now. Gee! what a thick-headed fool I was not to think of it before."

What?

What is the boy thinking of, anyhow?

To explain, we must go back to the morning, somewhere about ten o'clock, to the time when Dick, sent out on an errand by Mr. Slapman, started to run down Rector street toward one of the west side piers.

Now on that occasion Dick had no more than crossed Greenwich street than he perceived ahead of him a young girl, neatly dressed and of attractive appearance, standing in front of a big tenement playing upon an accordion with no little skill, and singing as she played.

There was quite a crowd of children around her, so many, in fact, that Dick saw that he

would have difficulty in pushing his way among them.

He did not try. Stepping into the street, he hurried toward the girl and held out his hand.

"Good-morning, Kate. Dear me, I'm awful glad to meet you!"

"Why, Dick Wells, is it you?" the girl exclaimed. "I haven't seen you in an age!"

The greeting was most hearty, and was accompanied by a smile so pleasant as to make the girl's round German face look almost handsome.

Evidently there was old acquaintance here.

It was so.

Dick Wells and "Accordion Kate"—it was the only name Dick had ever heard the girl called by—were old neighbors and warm friends.

Two years before Kate had lived in a certain Brooklyn tenement, renting a room for her own use directly across the hall from Dick's.

Morning and night they had been accustomed to meet on the stairs and exchange "the time of day," as the saying goes.

This had continued for so long a time that Dick began to wish he could know the girl better, but somehow it seemed impossible to improve the acquaintance.

One day he missed her, and from that time had never laid eyes on her until now, although he never heard the sound of an accordion without looking around to see if it were played by Kate.

"It is an age!" answered Dick, still keeping hold of the girl's hand. "Where in the world have you been all the while?"

Kate laughed—her laugh was as musical as her smile was sweet.

"Oh, people got tired of my music in Brooklyn," she said. "I thought I would try New York for awhile. Beside, I had a brother who—who—well, I don't mind telling an old friend like you, Dick Wells. My brother Tony was over to the Island for a couple of years. Now he's out again, and joined a mission. He wanted some one to make a home for him, and there wasn't no one but me."

"Well, I hope he's stuck to his work, Kate," replied Dick, who invariably felt but little faith in Mr. Tony's repentance.

"Oh, he has, beautiful. Why, he's quite a orator." Dick, you'd jest ought to hear Tony pray."

"I'll go and hear him sometime for your sake, Kate. Where are you living?"

"At 90 Baxter street, top floor, back."

"Whew! A tough neighborhood! No wonder I couldn't find you!"

"Did you look for me, Dick?"

"Did I?" cried Dick. "Well, now, I just did!"

Kate smiled again, and dropped her eyes.

"I didn't suppose anybody cared enough about me to look me up," she said.

"Well, then, I do, Kate. I would like to care more about you if you would let me. I—why, what's the matter?"

The girl had started suddenly, and grasping Dick's arm, pointed with intense excitement toward a man who was hurrying toward them up the hill.

He was a man of most peculiar appearance.

We would take the trouble to describe him, but it seems scarcely necessary, since we have already done so. All we need do is to mention that it was no less a person than "the gentleman from Arizona," and the reader will understand.

It was, in fact, no one else but Tom Cohnschaster, alias Dutch Tom, the outlaw.

He appeared to be in a great hurry as he came toward them, carrying a large and seemingly heavy parcel under his arm.

"What is it?" cried Dick, without the faintest

idea that the man with the big white hat had anything to do with it.

"That's my father, Dick Wells! I haven't seen him in years. Oh, I wish I could run away!"

"Your father! Why—what—"

It was too late to say any more, for the man was upon them.

Kate drew back, hoping that he would pass without seeing her, evidently, but in this she was disappointed.

The man not only caught sight of her, but the anxious, troubled expression upon his face changed into a joyful look of recognition.

He turned and darted into the middle of the street toward Kate, exclaiming in German:

"Katrina! Katrina! Ah, my dear little child!"

"I'll see you later, Kate," whispered Dick, thinking that it was a good time for him to leave.

He turned away and hurried on his errand, thinking no more of the encounter until when about fifteen minutes later as he was returning from the pier who should he meet but Kate again coming out of a saloon with her accordion in its green bag under one arm, and the big parcel which the stranger had carried under the other. Taken altogether the girl seemed pretty well loaded down.

"Dick! Is it you again?" she exclaimed, looking anxiously about her. "Oh, dear me, I am in such a fix!"

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Don't let's stop to talk here. I—I'm afraid. Can you spare me a minute?"

"Yes—a dozen."

"Then come on."

She led the way around into Greenwich street, moving hurriedly up-town.

"What is it, Kate?" asked Dick. "Was your father ugly to you?"

"Oh, no, no. He's never ugly unless he's drunk. He took me so by surprise. I haven't seen him for years."

"Has he been away?"

"Yes. Out West; but don't ask me about him. He is not a good man, Dick Wells. He—I—that is—oh, dear, I shall have to tell you, he's a very bad man indeed."

"I'd like to see him be bad to you, Kate."

"Oh, don't bother you head about that. Look here, do you see this bundle?"

"Certainly. My eyesight is fine this morning."

"Dick, it's full of money."

"What?"

"It's full of money. Some men are chasing father and he got frightened. He gave me the money to take care of so that he might give them the slip."

"Gee, why, Kate, there might be a million dollars in that big bundle."

"So there might for all I know. I'm almost scared to death."

"What are you going to do?"

"Father told me to keep the bundle until night and then bring it out to my aunt's in Brooklyn."

"Whereabouts in Brooklyn?"

"Oh, a long way. Out by the old lamplblack factory on the Hunterly road."

"I'm sure I don't know where that is?"

"But I do. I was born out there. My aunt lives there now, and so does my grandmother. Oh, dear me, I wonder if I ought to mind. I'm afraid I shall get myself into some awful trouble if I do, and I'm sure he'll kill me if I don't."

"Why do you think—" began Dick.

"No, I don't know anything at all about it," interrupted Kate.

Dick was about to ask her if she thought the money was stolen, but when she took him up so

short he wisely concluded to hold his tongue, but his suspicions were now pretty thoroughly aroused.

"I'd take the bundle around to the police station if I were you, Kate," he said, dryly.

"No, I'm afraid to do that."

"It's what you ought to do."

"Perhaps it is, but I don't dare. Oh, dear me, I wish I'd never met father. I've tried so hard to keep away from all of them and lead an honest life."

"Well, you've got to do something."

"So I have. Dear me, dear me. Say, Dick, do you see any one following us?"

Dick looked behind him, but could see no one who appeared to be observing their movements among the usual crowd which was moving along the street.

"I don't see any one, Kate."

"I was afraid there might be."

"Where's your father now?"

"Oh, he went off somewhere. "I don't know where."

"Well, what are you going to do?"

"What would you advise me to do?"

"I've already advised you, but you don't seem inclined to take my advice."

"I don't dare to go to the station. There's no use in trying to hide it from you, Dick. I'm afraid father stole this money."

Dick had not the least doubt of it.

"If I were to go to the station it would certainly lead to his arrest," continued Kate. "Dear me, I wish I had not taken it at all."

"Well, if you won't give it up to the police I only see one other way."

"What's that?"

"To do just as your father told you."

"But in the meanwhile?"

"He made me promise to go straight to my room and stay there until near dark before I started for my aunt's. The house is filled with terrible people, and I'm afraid. If Tony were only home now I'd ask him to help me, but he's away distributing tracts for the mission to-day."

In spite of Tony's pious occupation Dick felt grave doubts whether he would be the proper person to consult.

"You'll have to decide upon something," he said.

"I know it. I guess I'd better do just as father told me and go home."

"The way you feel I suppose that would be the best plan."

"I wish you could go with me, Dick."

"I wish I could but I can't possibly. Slapman would bounce me quicker than a wink. I've been away altogether too long as it is."

"Then I must go alone, and I'll go right off. I'll lock myself in and not leave the house till night. I suppose you'll never speak to me again, Dick Wells?"

"Indeed you've no right to say that. It don't make any difference to me what your father is, Kate."

They parted on the corner of Greenwich and Dey street, Dick going back to the express office, Kate hurrying on.

And though this matter had been uppermost in his mind all day, Dick Wells never once connected it with the trunk business until he saw Mr. Cohnschaster come staggering into the shanty.

Then and not until then he suspected the truth.

CHAPTER V.

OLD KING BRADY GETS A CLEW.

THE hanging of revolvers and the rush of feet were the last sounds heard by Dick Wells when he rushed so hastily out of the shanty.

It will be remembered that Old King Brady had called to him to stop, and that Dick paid no heed to the call.

The detective made no effort to enforce his command, however; just then he was intent upon other and more important game.

"Bang—bang!" went Old King Brady's revolver, as he flew after Jesse and Frank.

"Crack—crack!" went Frank's weapon in answer; Jesse would have fired but he was too far ahead.

The light in the shanty was poor, and Old King Brady was as unsuccessful in the matter of aim as was Frank.

It was good powder and ball wasted, for not one of the shots took effect.

The next the detective knew he was chasing the James Boys across the open lots through the snow.

Here was a novel experience.

If any one had told Old King Brady a few hours before that he would be hunting the famous James Boys through the wilds of Brooklyn before midnight it is quite unnecessary to say that he would have laughed them to scorn.

"Hold on, there! You'd better stop! I warn you!" shouted the detective, as he leaped through the door.

"Oh, you go West!" yelled Frank. "Here's a couple of pills for you!"

"Crack! Crack!" went the revolvers again, but the range was now too long to think of anything like aim.

Old King Brady never hesitated.

He knew that his powers as a runner were excellent, and his chance of shooting Frank quite as good as any chance Frank had of shooting him.

As for Jesse, he was by this time out of reach, and seemed to be giving his entire attention to his legs.

"That's the last shot I'm going to fire till I get a better show at you, Brady!" shouted Frank, through the gloom.

Was this a bait to urge the detective forward and lure him into ambush?

Old King Brady thought so, but it did not frighten him a bit. He simply dashed on.

A deep hollow lay before them, and Jesse made a run down the slope, Frank following.

Old King Brady, however, promptly halted as soon as he discovered the lay of the land.

This seemed to be the "show" that Frank was looking for. To hide under the edge of the hill and rush out upon him as he came up, would be altogether too easy a matter.

Old King Brady was a brave man, but he was not a fool.

"They've got me dead to rights now. I can never take them," he reflected.

He listened, but could hear no sound of footsteps, but then the snow might be responsible for that.

Making a detour, Old King Brady now approached the edge of the hollow at another point and, stooping down, cautiously peered over.

He had been mistaken. Away on the other side of the depression he could see two dark figures moving.

Presently they ran up the hill, remained in sight for an instant and then disappeared down the slope of another hollow beyond.

To attempt to follow them now would have been a hopeless task.

Reluctantly the detective gave it up and returned to the hut a prey to feelings of disgust, which he could scarcely control.

To his surprise, there was no one in the hut save the dying outlaw. He had fully expected to find the old woman there.

As the detective entered the man opened his eyes and stared at him in terror.

"Say, boss, I'm a-dym'," he murmured. "For God sake don't interfere with me. Let me die in peace."

"Have no fear, my poor fellow. I shall not interfere with you," replied the detective, kindly. "Let me see if I can't help you. I am something of a doctor—let me examine your wound."

"You may if you want to, but it ain't no use," was the faint reply. "I'm a goner—I'm hit near the heart—I'm bleeding to death."

"I'm afraid you are right. Let me go for a doctor. Is there one near here?"

"No, no. Don't. Mother has gone, but it won't amount to nothing. It will be all up with me before the doctor comes."

"I'm very sorry for you."

"Oh, hang your sorrow! I know you—you are Old King Brady, the detective. If I was only in shape you'd blame soon scoop me in. Did you shoot Jess or Frank?"

"No."

"I knowed you wouldn't. What put you on to this racket?"

"I heard all about it. Ease your conscience, my poor friend, and tell me what has become of that money that was stolen from the East Meridian bank."

"No, I won't! The money's all right. You'll never see it, nor the James Boys neither."

"Think of the future—another life is before you."

"Go to pot! There's no life after this. Oh, it's coming—it's coming!"

"What is coming?"

"Death!" almost shouted the fellow, half raising himself. "Death! Death! Kate! Oh, Kate! Where are you? Keep the money, Kate! Don't let them get it away from you! Keep it, Kate—don't let Tony know!"

His mind was wandering now, and the end was near, without the shadow of a doubt.

"Speak!" breathed Old King Brady. "The money—tell me where it is."

"Kate—Kate! I want you, Kate! Hurry, old woman! Get over to Pauline's quick, before the detective comes back. Kate's got the money—she's waiting—"

He ceased to speak, and with closed eyes lay there breathing heavily. Presently he ceased to breathe at all, and all was still.

"He's gone!" muttered the detective, seizing the hand and pressing the pulse.

It no longer beat.

Dutch Tom was dead beyond a doubt.

Satisfied that such was actually the case after a few moments, Old King Brady stood up and tried to think.

He had failed in his undertaking, but this was only the beginning, and success might crown his efforts yet. Already he saw work before him to do.

After a hasty examination of the contents of the trunk, which resulted in nothing, Old King Brady stepped to the back door of the shanty and looked out.

It was still snowing, and perfect stillness reigned. A more lonely spot could scarcely be conceived.

"The James boys will never come back here, that's certain," thought the detective. "What I've got to do now is to discover Pauline's house. That man's dying mutterings meant something. Thank goodness, I'm not without a clew."

He stepped back into the shanty and passed out by the front door. Hurrying down the steps he now produced his dark-lantern, and stooping down began to examine the snow.

Here were footprints in plenty. They were of

various sizes and pointed in every conceivable direction.

It was where Dick Wells and the James Boys had stood.

Old King Brady examined the surface of the snow with extreme care, and soon saw that another and smaller footprint had impressed itself upon top of all the rest.

Now, this was precisely what the detective was looking for.

He moved on and managed to trace these particular prints to a point beyond the others. He now saw that they were headed down Buffalo avenue in the direction of the Flatbush line.

Now all was plain sailing.

There was no longer any difficulty in tracing the footprints, and the detective hurried on.

He encountered nobody. Indeed, this was scarcely to be expected in a neighborhood so lonely.

He had covered no great distance, when he perceived a small house before him standing on top of the bank like the shanty, and approached by a long flight of stairs.

The footprints turned here and led up the steps.

"That's the way she went," muttered the detective. "If I could only get where I could hear and see without being seen, I might find out something. I broke in upon them so abruptly back there. I don't want to do the same thing again."

He advanced up the steps cautiously and looked about him.

The house was a small, dilapidated affair, but it was still a house and not a shanty. A light burned behind the window of one of the lower rooms, and as the window was unobscured by curtains or blinds there was nothing to prevent the detective from looking into the room.

"Just what I want!" muttered the detective, and he crept up to it.

Yes, it was just what he wanted.

There, inside the room was the old woman seated in a chair. She was crying bitterly and kept wringing her hands.

There was also a younger woman—a round-faced, little-eyed German.

She was talking volubly in her native tongue. Provoking!

It drove Old King Brady fairly furious.

One of the window panes was broken, and had been mended with a paper. He could hear every word that was uttered, but he could not understand a solitary one.

"Deuce take them! Why can't they speak English?" he muttered.

He took his place in the shadow, and there remained watching and listening.

It was well that he did.

His patience was destined to be rewarded at last.

Did you ever listen to two German-Americans talking in their own language and not hear them occasionally break into English for a moment, and then return to German again?

If you never heard this you may at any time. Just observe our German citizens a bit closely and you will be sure to hear them do this very thing.

For several minutes the conversation continued in German, then all of a sudden the young woman seemed to get angry.

"Let him die!" she roared out, "he's no good. I tell you, mother, Kate hasn't been here."

Kate!

It was coming.

Yes—disappointment.

The answer was as Dutch as a barrel of saurkraut.

Fortunately, however, it did not turn the woman.

"I don't care. He was never no brudder to me. If he's fool enough to give Kate stolen money she'll be fool enough to let Tony get it. Go to Baxter street if you want to find her, or ketch her in the street when she's playin' the 'cordion. Don't come here where she hasn't been in six months."

The old woman rose wearily.

"I'm goin' back, Pauline," she said, speaking now for the first time in English. "Likely he's dead by this time already. Oh, Lord! he vos a petter sou to his poor old mudder dan you vos a taughter. I know dat much."

Thus saying, the wretched old creature, still weeping, moved toward the door.

But when she got out into the yard she did not find Old King Brady, though, had her eyes been sharper, she might have seen his tall form moving ahead of her through the snow.

"I've no further use for her," thought the detective, as he pulled away from the window. "To stop and fool with her would only delay me. I rather flatter myself that I can put my finger on this girl. Little Kate, the accordion-player, eh? Well, well, I know her!"

In fact, pretty well every one whose business took them about the streets of New York knew Accordion Kate.

CHAPTER VI.

CAPTURED BY FRANK.

"Accordion Kate?"

"Yes, Accordion Kate; you must know her."

"You mean dot putty leedle Deutscher gal vat makes her living mit de acgordion?"

"Of course, of course."

"Yaw! I knows her."

"Which house does she live in? Is it on this block or the next?"

"Dat's schust vat I can't tell you, Meester Prady. So hellup me gracious! I would eef I could."

And Mr. Lazarus Cohen—the only original and genuine Cohen on Baxter street—throw up his hands with the gesture peculiar to his race, his countenance expressing the innocence of a child.

It was early morning, a trifle after six o'clock, and the snow lay as thickly on Baxter street as it did everywhere else.

Mr. Cohen with a keen eye to the capture of the early worm was already taking down the shutters as Old King Brady came along, anxious to get the start of his business rival and namesake, Mr. Israel Cohen, whose shop was across the way.

Rumor had it that there was only one Cohen, and that the pretended rivalry between the two concerns was all a fake.

This, however, could scarcely be, for these two sons of Jacob, instead of dwelling together in brotherly love and unity, were at each other night and day. The one calling the other a thief, the other swearing that the one was a swindler.

Thus for years a continual warfare had been waged between them, and business prospered on both sides of Baxter street.

Perhaps they met secretly by night to divide profits and laugh at the gullibility of the public. We won't say they did not, for it would be hard to tell.

It had been no use to look for Accordion Kate the night before. Though Old King Brady fully realized this, he still tried it, hound to leave no stone unturned.

Leaving the scene of the tragedy in the Brooklyn lots, the detective had made the best of his way to Baxter street, but by the time he reached that dingy thoroughfare, it had been too late to act.

Every shop was closed except the saloons, which did business behind closed doors.

Even the Cohens had taken in their rows of coats, with the sleeves turned inside out, so as to display the rainbow coloring of the silk linings; and when the Cohens are shut up, you may be very certain it is pretty late.

From the policeman on beat, and from one or two other sources, Old King Brady made a few inquiries, but they amounted to nothing.

Thus reluctantly he began to realize that nothing could be done until morning.

Morning had come now, and here he was.

"I've got to find that girl," said the detective, firmly. "Cohen, you must try to help me, if you can."

"How I hellup you, huh?" growled the Jew. "I no can tell you vat I don't know mine-selluf."

"But surely you must have seen this girl passing up and down the street many times."

"Of course I haf. Vat den? She no tell me vere she lif. I never spoge mit her in my life. Look here, Meester Prady, schust come inside till I show you a goat vat vill schust fit you. Dot plue ting mit de long tails ish getting old."

"Nonsensel Cohen, you are fooling with me. I'm well aware that you know everybody in Baxter street. Remember those goods stolen from Todgers & Wheat that I traced to your store. I went light on you that time, but if you are not accommodating there may be trouble yet."

The Jew's pale face turned slightly paler.

"Holt on, Meester Prady, I schust remembered somedings," he whispered confidentially. "Efery Sunday nide—I mean my Sunday, und dot's Sadrday—Kate play de acgordion by Attanelli's for de poys to dance. Mebbe you don't inguire dere."

It was a good suggestion, and Old King Brady at once acted upon it.

Attanelli's was a noted Italian saloon of rather the better sort, situated in that far-famed locality in Mulberry Bend.

Thither the detective hurried now, sure of finding the place open, for the excellent reason that it never closed.

"Accordion Kate?" said the bartender in a confidential tone. "Oh, she lives round in Baxter street, No. 90, top floor."

This was enough.

Old King Brady returned to Baxter street, and toiled up the dirty stairs of the tall tenement until he caught the glow of the rising sun through the skylight, which told him that he had reached his journey's end at last.

Nothing now remained but to determine whether Kate's room was front or rear.

The building was a narrow one, and not very deep. Then there were only two sets of rooms to a floor, three in front, counting the dark room, and as many more in the rear.

Tackling the front rooms first, the detective received no response to his knock. Then he tried it in the rear, taking every door on the floor, but it was just the same.

On the floors below people were moving about, passing up and down stairs even, but no one paid the slightest attention to him.

Why should they?

They felt that they had no more concern with the floor above than they had with the moon.

"It begins to look most mightily as though there were no one here," reflected Old King Brady.

He was back at the door of one of the front rooms now, and, stooping down, he peered through the keyhole.

The room was vacant. He could see that plainly enough.

So was the one alongside of it, and when the detective tried the rear door he found it different.

Here through the keyhole he could catch a

glimpse of a neat interior, a strip of carpet lay upon the floor. There were a stove, a table and chairs to be seen.

He knocked again, but still no answer came.

Then he went below and inquired of a good natured Irish woman who occupied the apartments underneath.

The room was that of the accordion player—he had not been deceived.

"When did you see her last?" inquired the detective.

"Shure I seen her go out yesterday, toward evenin'," replied the woman, "and by the same token I haven't seen her since."

"Then you don't know that she came back again?"

"I don't know nuthin' about it, but she might have come twenty times and I not know it. I'm a peaceable body, sor, and I mind me own business. I never fret myself about my neighbors' concerns, havin' all I can do to mind me own."

"I've got to know if that girl is in her room, and that's all there is about it," thought Old King Brady as he returned up the stairs.

He waited until he heard the woman shut her door, and then after knocking again and meeting with no response, he deliberately drew a skeleton key from his pocket and inserted it into the lock.

"If she is inside she has no doubt bolted the door, and that will settle it," he reflected.

The door, however, was not bolted. It opened easily under the skeleton key, and Old King Brady stepped into the room.

No one was there. The fire was out in the stove, frost covered the window panes; the room was deserted and cold.

It was evident also that no one had been there during the night, for in one corner of the room stood a cot bed. It was neatly made up and undisturbed.

"Balked!" muttered Old King Brady, disgustedly. "I've penetrated the cage, but the bird has flown."

Stay, though! It was best to be sure. There was another room opening off of this one, and the door stood ajar between.

Old King Brady pushed aside the door and passed into the room.

It was a small apartment and a dark one. There was a bed in it, also undisturbed, and beside that a great chest of unusual size which seemed to be fastened to the floor, while hanging suspended to hooks were a coat and a pair of trousers. Evidently this room was occupied by a man.

Old King Brady raised the lid of the chest and looked in. There were a few articles of clothing in the chest—not half enough to fill it.

Just as the detective closed the lid he thought he heard a slight noise at the door outside.

Was the girl returning?

Such was his idea, and he now remembered that he had left the door ajar.

"She'll be scared to death when she sees me," he reflected, "and likely enough will scream. I must be careful or I shall lose her."

He stepped back quickly into the room and found himself face to face—not with Accordion Kate—but with a tall, wiry fellow with long hair and solemn visage.

In a word, it was Frank James.

It was startling.

There is no denying it.

For once Old King Brady was taken off his guard.

"Great snakes! the detective!" burst from Frank, and before Old King Brady had time to think the outlaw had whipped out a glittering revolver and leveled it at his head.

"Gesh daug it all, I've got the drop on you

this time, Brady," he breathed. "What in thunder brung you hyar?"

It was a desperate moment.

Old King Brady made certain that it was to be his last, but in spite of all he kept wonderfully cool.

He was completely at Frank's mercy. To draw his own weapon would have been simple madness. The slightest movement of his hands he knew meant instant death.

"Well," he said quietly, "we meet again, Mr. Frank James, it seems."

"Looks that way, don't it?" replied the outlaw. "Hold up a minute, hyar comes Jess."

Already the sound of footsteps had been heard upon the stairs; now the door opened and in stalked Jesse James.

He started back at the sight of the detective, uttering an exclamation of surprise mingled with rage.

"Old King Brady! It is, by Judas! I've got you now!" he hissed.

"Hold on, brother!" breathed Frank. "Don't be rash. Jest you shet that 'ar door an' slip the bolt."

The advice was too sound to be questioned and Jesse obeyed.

Meanwhile, as Frank's arm never wavered, Old King Brady saw nothing for it but to stand rigid and face the muzzle of the pistol.

It would have been an undertaking impossible for a man with weaker nerves.

"Now we've got him," whispered Frank. "Jess, jest you look an' see if thar's any one in that ar inside room."

"No, it's empty," reported Jesse, looking.

"Thet's biz. Brady, jest you hold on. Jess, go through him and take his toothpick and pop-gun, for I make no doubt he's got both."

"Won't do nothin' of the sort," growled Jesse producing his own pistol. "I swore I'd kill the sucker ef I hed to come to New York to do it. I'm in New York now, an' b'gosh I'm goin' to keep my word."

"Better not, Mr. James," said Old King Brady, calmly.

"Why not?"

"Because the instant you fire you'll bring the whole house to the top floor. It might puzzle you a bit to escape."

"Guess I kin fight my way through a crowd. I've done it before."

"Guess you won't try, though," snapped Frank. "Jess, don't you be a fool. We'll kill him before we quit ef we get the chance, but not now. Say, be you goin' ter go through him or not?"

Jesse made no reply but sulkily advanced, revolver in hand, and proceeded to search the detective's pockets, depriving him of every means of defense.

"That settles it," said Frank as Jesse coolly pocketed a fine silver mounted revolver, another and older pistol and a long knife, which even a Missourian need not have been ashamed to own.

Old King Brady watched the disappearance of his property with a sigh.

He never saw the articles again.

"Got any more?" demanded Jesse.

"No."

"Sure?"

"You been through me. You ought to know best."

"What's this?"

Jesse was running his hands over the blue coat as he spoke and he now drew a small, flat wallet from the inner pocket.

"Money, eh?" he growled. "More'n a hundred dollars. Wal, you won't need it in t'other world, and thar's whar yer goin'. Mebbe it'll come handy ter me."

The wallet disappeared as completely as the revolvers and the knife.

"Won't you take the diamond studs out of my shirt, Mr. James?" asked the detective, sarcastically. "Help yourself—you may as well make a clean sweep while you're about it."

Jesse never answered but tore open Old King Brady's vest.

"Them's no diamonds," he growled. "Looks like as if they'd come out'n a dollar store. Glass an' brass."

"Right you air, brother," chimed in Frank. "Most like they were give away with a pound of tea. Brady, I'm ashamed of you for wearin' sich things. Why they tell me a million dollars wouldn't begin to represent your wealth."

"Is that any reason why I should supply such fellows as you with jewelry, Frank James?"

"Wall, pra'aps not," admitted Frank, ever practical; "but, blame me, if we hain't a fritterin' away of precious moments, Jess; take his ticker, why don't yer, and then we'll be ready for biz."

"Help yourself, gents. It's as brassy as the studs. Only cost five dollars—had it made expressly with a view to thieves."

"Don't you call me a thief!" snarled Jesse, seizing the watch. "Even the chain's plated," he added, with a disgusted growl.

"If you're not a thief there never was one," replied the detective, in the same calm tone. "But come, gentlemen, if you're in a hurry, why so am I. What do you propose to do?"

"What would you advise us to do, Brady?" asked Frank. "Though we kinder don't agree on sartain pints of doctrine, I'm willin' to own to it thet you're the most level headedest man what I ever met."

"That depends upon your motives," replied the detective.

"Fust of all we want to see you croak, an' I propose to help you ter do it," snarled Jesse.

"Yes, yes. I understand that. You mean to kill me, but you little understand the risk you run. I'm on my own dung hill this time, gentlemen—not on yours. If you think you can kill me in a crowded tenement in New York city and not be caught, you'll find yourself very much mistaken—let me tell you that. Why the very stones of the street know me and will rise up and testify against you. Better take a fool's advice, gentlemen, and let me go."

"Oh, you go to grass; that's all bluff, Brady," put in Frank. "Say, we might as well understand one another fust as last. Some one put you onto our little racket. Who was it—Joe Hart, the cashier of the East Meridian Bank?"

"None of your business, Frank James"

"Now, I'll be blamed ef thet hain't cool! Why, man, we're here on no other business"

"An' I say we'd better get about it pretty blame quick," interrupted Jesse. "Fust thing you know we'll be ketched. Who's dom' the chinnin' neow?"

"Hold on, brother. I'm a comin' to the p'int. Brady, you can't fool me. I know all. Joe Hart is in New York and you hev seen him. You're here because this here room belongs to Dutch Tom's darter. You know that Dutch Tom afore he went on the tear gave up the money he stole from Jess an' me to that there said darter. Now, then, whar's the boodle? Hev yer got it? Ef yer hev, jst show us whar yer put it, an' blame me ef I don't let you go scot free."

"Who told you that Dutch Tom gave the money to his daughter? Who gave you the address of this place?" questioned the detective, edging toward the door.

"Hyar! Yon jest stand still thar!" exclaimed Frank, flourishing his revolver menacingly. "No funny biz. Ef you want to know who told

us, it was the old woman. We were back to the shanty after you left."

"I thought as much. I see now that I've made another mistake."

"You are always makin' mistakes, Brady, an' the biggest mistake of yer life what you ever made was when you ran foul of the James Boys. Now, old man, it's no use talkin'. We want thet thar boodle, an' we're bound to get it. Hev you any information ter give us? Ef so spit it out, an' it shall be duly credited to your side of the page."

"I have nothing to tell you, Mr. James, and if I had I shouldn't tell it. I've just arrived here myself. Everything then was as you see it now."

"Then the gal evidently warn't hyar last night," put in Jesse. "I told you so, Frank. Jest as soon as ever she got her paws on to the money she lit out. Dutch Tom's darter! What else could you expect?"

"Wal, nawthin, Jess, an' thet's about so. We've got to search the place, though."

"Better dispose of Brady first. We hain't got nothin' to tie him with, and we can't leave him standin' hyar."

"Blest ef I know what to do with him," said Frank, looking puzzled. "It's jest az he says, Jess. Ef we fire our guns hyar we'll hev the hull neighborhood down on top of us!"

"Might stick him," suggested Jesse.

"Tain't in my line," replied Frank, disgustedly. "I'm used to shootin' folks, but I don't like stickin'. It always went again the grain fer me to stick a pig even. No, I can't do that, Jess."

"An' I don't want, brother. Hyar, you keep him covered while I look about."

It was a trying situation for Old King Brady to stand there with Frank's cocked revolver pointing straight at him, and watch Jesse as he moved about the room looking for the means to take his life.

"We might put him on the bed and shoot him under the clothes," suggested Frank.

"Do you think he'd lay still? Who's gwinter hold him, yer fool? Wait till I hev a squint in t'other room."

Old King Brady shuddered.

He felt his chances diminishing. He could think of a way in which he could be shot and comparatively no risk run, and he felt very sure that Jesse would discover it too.

And he was right.

"I've hit it!" called the outlaw from the dark room presently. "Jest the very thing, Frank. Fetch him in hyar."

"March!" said Frank.

But instead of marching, Old King Brady made a sudden leap for Frank, flung one long arm about his neck and tried to seize the hand which held the pistol.

It was a bold attempt, but it failed.

Jesse had not waited for his order to be obeyed.

He was out of the dark room now, and before Old King Brady could possess himself of Frank's weapon, the brother had him by the throat with his own revolver pressed against his head.

"No, yer don't!" he hissed. "Yer can't come it. You're a bold one, Brady, but 'twon't work."

It was hopeless.

Even the great strength of Old King Brady was no match for that of the outlaw brothers.

They had him foul in an instant, and in spite of all the resistance he could make dragged him into the dark room toward the great wooden chest.

That fatal chest!

Just what had occurred to Old King Brady had suggested itself to Jesse.

A shot fired inside the confined space of the chest would scarcely be heard on the floors below.

"In with him, brother," breathed Jesse. "He's our game!"

They raised the unhappy man between them and flung him into the chest.

Once he was in his form could no longer be distinguished in the darkness, for in the scuffle the door of the room had been caught by Old King Brady's foot and pulled shut.

"Good-bye, Brady!" called Jesse.

He thrust the revolver into the chest and fired.

From the bottom of the chest came a sharp cry, then all was still.

The brothers bent over and listened.

Not a sound made itself heard.

"Better fire again and make sure," suggested Frank.

"No, 'tain't no use," answered Jesse. "We've fixed him. He'd say something if he was alive."

But Old King Brady said nothing.

Would the voice of the brave old detective ever be heard again?

CHAPTER VII.

DICK HEARS A MYSTERIOUS VOICE.

"He's a goner," said Jesse. "Thar ain't no sort of doubt about that."

The brothers for several moments remained motionless, listening.

There was no sound from the chest, no excitement on the floor below, nor upon the stairs.

"It worked to a charm," said Frank, at last. "Now there's jest one more thing to be did, and we're safe."

"What's that?"

"To nail down the lid of the chest. Before any one will take the trouble to pry it open we'll be miles away."

"Don't see the use in that."

"It will give us time."

"But how be we goin' ter manage it? Whar's yer hammer an' yer nails?"

"I seen both on ther mantel-piece in the room outside."

"Well, to satisfy you, we'll do it, though I'm blamed ef I can see ther good."

Frank fetched the hammer and nails, and proceeded to put his plan into execution.

He had about finished nailing the lid of the chest securely, when he suddenly paused in his work with an exclamation of disgust.

"Say," he whispered, "did you look into ther chest to see ef ther bundle was thar, Jess?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, it's a blame good job yer did then. I never onct thought nawthin' about it."

"I don't forget anything like that, Frank."

"Thet's so. You allus did hev a good memory."

"I'd been a chump ef I hadn't remembered a thing like that, Frank," replied Jesse, with as much nonchalance as if he had but just killed a rat. "Now, then, brother, ez there don't seem to be no one a comin' s'pose we search this place and make sure the boodle ain't here. Then I'm off for Wixon's Hotel to meet Joe and find out what he told that blasted detective. Blame him, I've a good mind to take a drop on him, too! He'd better not show himself in Missouri again. I told him I'd make his account square ef I got the money. Why couldn't he trust my word?"

"Wal, yer can't hardly blame Joe, with the penitentiary a starin' o' him in ther face," replied Frank. "He's got a tarnation big family on his hands, and more then thet, Joe never did hev no sand into him."

"If he had I'd take him into the gang," replied Jesse. "I'd like ter do something for Joe

after gettin' him into the scrape. Blame me ef I wouldn't, now."

"You can't do nawthin' for a feller like him," answered Frank. "The Lord helps them ez helps themselves."

"Then he orter help us, by time!" muttered Jesse, "for we've been helpin' ourselves to everything we could lay our hands onto for the last ten years."

Frank's only reply was a short laugh.

They then set about a systematic examination of the place.

It amounted to nothing, however. At least, such was the case as far as the stolen funds of the bank of East Meridian were concerned. The contents of closets and bureau drawers were tumbled over recklessly. The beds were examined, and every available hiding-place explored.

"'Tain't hyar," growled Jesse, at last. "Thet's as sure as shooting."

Meanwhile profound silence had been maintained inside the chest.

It seemed certain that Old King Brady had met his fate at last.

As a last effort Frank was rummaging about the dish closet outside, while Jesse was feeling in the pockets of the clothes which hung in the dark room.

"Hey, Jess! I've found something!" exclaimed Frank, coming in.

"What is it?"

"A letter. It was inside the sugar bowl—blame me ef it warn't."

"A letter!"

"Yes, and it's addressed to Kate—the gal you know."

"Does it tell whar the money is?"

"Wall, I kinder can't make it all out."

"Here, give it to me," exclaimed Jesse, seizing the folded sheet of paper. "You always make sich a fuss about reading writing."

"You're another! I guess I kin read as well as you. I'll bet ten dollars you'll be puzzled with them fly tracks too."

In truth the writing was horrible, but it was in English. Jesse had more than half expected to find it in German when he took the letter from Frank.

He stepped to the door of the dark room and read it aloud.

"DEAR KATE:—I was only fooling you. I ain't run over and hurt at all. You wouldn't give up that money to me, so I had to come a little game to get it. I was bound to have it, and I have just taken it out of the big chest. This money's been stolen, Kate. Father stole it. I'm a Christian now, and I can't do no other than a Christian should. Dear sister, I know who this money belongs to. He's a gent by the name of Hart, and I'm going to give it back to him. That is most all of it, but I shall make him give me some of it for the good work of rescuing the perishing. It would have been a bad thing for you to give it up to father. I regard it as a special dispensation of Providence that it's come into my hands. Don't look for me, Kate. It won't be no use. I shan't never come back any more. Mebbe I shall go for a missionary to the heathen and spend my life a-bringin' lost souls back to the Lord."

"Ycnr brother,

"TONY."

"P. S. Kate, it's all for the best. Don't be mad with me."

Such were the contents of the letter.

We give it as it was—not as Jesse read it.

As may easily be imagined the sensation produced was profound.

"Wal, I swar!" breathed Frank. "Ef that thar ain't the greatest go I ever did hear tell on. Who's this here Tony, Jess?"

"Dutch Tom's son, of course," snarled Jesse, disgustedly. "Hain't you never heard him tell about the feller, and what a big addition he'd be to ther gang?"

"Oh, aye! I remember now. So he's the feller what's got thet money! Wal, wal! He's been in quod a couple of times too, if I recollect right."

"That's so."

"What are we going to do?"

"Blest if I know—yes, I do, though. I'm goin' to steer straight for Wixon's hotel and interview Joe Hart."

"Say, Jess."

"What is it, brother?"

"How in time do you s'pose this feller Tony and Joe Hart got their heads together?"

"Beats me."

"Joe can't hev been here more'n a few hours. 'Tain't possible he knowed Tony afore he came."

"No, 'tain't in the nature of things, au' that's ther truth. But he's done it somehow."

"But we must spoil their game, Jess."

"Sure as shootin', Frank."

"It's a blame good job we got rid of the detective. Now to tackle Joe."

"If we can find him."

"Wixon's hotel."

"I know, I know! That's the address in the telegram he sent me last night, what we found awaiting fer us in the mornin'; but ef Joe's got the money you can be blame sure of one thing."

"What that?"

"He ain't at no Wixon's Hotel now. Hark! By the holy poker, thar's some un' aknocking at the door."

There was no mistake about it.

Some one was knocking at the outer door, and knocking hard.

"Great snakes!" breathed Frank, his long, solemn countenance seeming to lengthen out several inches. "What be we gwine ter do?"

Unless they wanted to jump out of the window down a height of a hundred feet or so, there was no possible way of leaving the apartments of Accordion Kate save by the door.

"Rap, rap, rap! Rap, rap, rap!"

Now the knocking was repeated louder than ever.

"Gosh!" blurted Jesse, "something's got ter be did."

"Fust thing's to find out who 'tis," whispered Frank courageously. "Thar ain't no use in cryin' out 'fore a feller's hurt. It might be the gal herself come back."

"Or Tony."

"You kin jest bet 'tain't Tony."

"No, 'tain't likely. But it's a man anyhow. I kin tell thet by the ring of his fist. Dogon him, thar he goes agin."

"Rap, rap! Rap, rap! Rap, rap!"

Louder than ever came the tattoo upon the door.

"Something's got ter be did right away," whispered Frank. "Say, Jess."

"What is it?"

"You're got the softest twist to your voice. Arsk who's thar."

"Hold up! Mebbe the feller'll go away and give us a chance to slip out."

But the "feller" evidently had no such intention.

Just as Jesse spoke he ceased knocking, and was heard to call through the key-hole:

"Kate! Oh, Kate!"

"It's some one after the gal," whispered Jesse. "I'll bet yer what yer like it is Tony after all."

"Who's thar? Is it you, Tony?" he called, raising his voice to a shrill falsetto, which heard through a deal door might possibly have passed muster for a woman's.

"No, it's me, Kate. Why don't you let me in?"

"Who in thunder is 'me'?" snapped Frank, in a low whisper. "Arsk him his name, Jess. You're doin' well."

"Who are you?" repeated Jesse.

"Dick Wells, Kate. I must see you. I've been here two or three times and almost wild. For Heaven's sake let me in."

"Snakes an' woodchucks!" ejaculated Frank, in tones almost loud enough to have been heard, "it's thet thar boy what drove the express."

"An' jest the very feller we want," whispered Jesse. "He knows this feller Tony and he knows the gal. More'n that, he knows this infernal city and all its halls an' corners, while we don't know nothin' about it. We've got ter buy him onto our side, brother. Jest like ez not he kin put us inter the way of gettin' onto that feller Tony whar nobody else could."

"You're right. Go for him, Jess."

Jesse crept toward the door as softly as possible, and slipping the bolt, drew back.

Frank had already put himself out of sight, and poor Dick—for the knocker was no one else—walked unsuspectingly into the trap.

Yes, it was Dick.

He had plunged himself into trouble again, and with the best of motives.

On the night previous he had come from the Buffalo avenue shanty to Baxter street and rapped upon Kate's door, receiving no response.

He did not come direct.

He also had gone to the little house further along Buffalo avenue, and inquired for Kate.

He had reached the place before old Mrs. Cohnschaster and had been assured by Pauline that Kate had not been to her house in months.

Shortly after Dick left the house the old woman came.

No wonder Pauline had become excited at this persistent demand for her niece.

Now, if Old King Brady had only examined the opposite side of the street, he would have discovered Dick's footprints, but he did not, and so the boy went and returned unsuspected.

Somewhere about midnight he was at Baxter street.

At five in the morning he was there again, but still could obtain no answer to his repeated knockings. Now, for the third time, he had presented himself, and it was with a heavy heart, for he had just received his discharge from Mr. Slapman, on account of what had happened the night before.

"You were a blamed little fool not to drive to the nearest station house," the expressman had said. "Now you've got me mixed up in the nastiest kind of scrape. I hain't got no further use for you, Dick Wells."

Poor Dick!

His stock had taken a sad tumble.

Still he determined to make the effort to have the money restored to its rightful owners, and here he was at Kate's again.

Dick came into the room with a rush.

Instantly the door was slammed behind him and bolted.

To his utter dismay, the boy found himself in the power of the James Boys once more.

Dick made one wild leap for the door, but it was too late.

"Hold hard!" breathed Jesse, catching him by the shoulder and flinging him back. "Keep your shirt on, Dick Wells!"

"Wha—what are you doing here?" stammered Dick, in dismay.

"What are *you* doing here? That's the question."

"I—I want to see some one."

"Kate Cornshaster—Dutch Tom's darter?"

"Yes—yes! I s'pose you know."

"I know everything, young feller. When you get better acquainted with me you'll find thet

I'm a perfect knowledge-box. Git over thar in the corner by the stove where I kin get a good shot at yer. Get a move on you now. Quick!"

"Say, don't kill me, mister," pleaded Dick, as he tremblingly obeyed.

"Thet depends upon yourself," said Frank.

"I want you to understand one thing, boy. We wouldn't make no more of killing you than we would a skunk."

Dick firmly believed it.

He felt that he had fallen into evil times.

"What do you want of me?" he faltered. "It won't do you no good to kill me."

"Thar yer right, and we won't do it unless you rile us. If we're riled we're bad. It depends all on yourself, Dick Wells."

"How?"

"We need your help."

"What for?"

"To get that money what Dutch Tom stole from us. You know pretty much all about it, I guess."

"The long and short of it is," interrupted Jesse, "we've got into a hole and we look to you to help us out, bub. Ef you'll do it, an' be true, you shall have jest one thousand dollars in case of success. Think of it. A thousand dollars. What a start in life it'll give you. Don't speak in a hurry now—think."

"And if I refuse?" asked Dick.

"Why then I shall be under the disagreeable necessity of shootin' you, and I don't want to do that."

"You understand, I s'pose?" questioned Frank.

Dick felt that he understood, only too well.

A thousand dollars!

Well, it was a big temptation.

"I could start a Brooklyn express of my own with that," thought Dick.

The thought decided him.

"I s'pose there ain't any use in holding out," he said.

"Not a bit of it," said Frank. "Do you sw'ar to stick to us?"

"I'll do what I can."

"Sw'ar!" cried Frank, displaying his revolver menacingly.

"I—I swear."

It was done.

Really we don't see how Dick could have done anything else; but it must be admitted that he never felt so thoroughly ashamed of himself in all his life.

"That's business," said Jesse. "Now, boy, you jest answer me a few questions, and look out that you answer true. What did Dutch Tom tell you before he died?"

"He told me that his daughter Kate had the money and for me to see her and tell her to keep it."

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you come straight here and tell her the message then?"

"I did come here, but I couldn't get in."

"Did you tell that detective, Old King Brady, what Tom said?"

"No, indeed."

"Hold on, don't lie."

"I'm telling you the truth. I never spoke a word to the detective. I never even saw him after I got out of the house."

"I don't think the boy is lyin', brother," said Frank.

"Mebbe you're right," answered Jesse. "So much for so much. Now attention, Dick Wells."

"I'm listening."

"You don't know whar the money is?"

"No."

"Nor whar the gal is?"

"No."

"Do you know a fellow named Tony?"

"Kate's brother?"

"Yes."

"I'm not much acquainted with him. I know him by sight."

"What kind of a fellow is he?"

"No good."

"How no good?"

"He's been up on the Island two or three times."

"What for?"

"Stealing."

"Is that all?"

"Ain't that enough?" retorted Dick, forgetting for the moment that he was talking to two of the most successful thieves in the United States.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. James," he hastened to add when he saw the mistake he had made.

"What fer?" asked Jesse.

"Fer what I said."

"Wal, yer said jest right. Do you mean to say I'm one of your low thieves? I tell you I'm a Missourian and a gentleman. I—"

"Oh, bags!" broke in Frank. "There's gas enough goin' hyar to supply a town. For gracious' sakes, get on!"

"Draw it mild, brother, draw it mild."

"But yer so blamed long-winded when you want to get to the pint, Jess. You know az well az I do how important it is for us to get outer here."

"Talk to the boy yourself, then."

"I'll do it. Looker hyar, Dick Wells, the long and short on it is that Tony has swiped ther bag and lit out."

"You don't mean it?" cried Dick. "There! I told Kate he'd do it, but she wouldn't listen."

There was a profound silence for an instant.

Frank looked at Jesse—Jesse looked at Frank.

Dick saw the pickle his ill-timed remark had put him into, but it was too late.

"You told her thet, did 'r?" said Jesse, slowly. "Now, by rights, I oughter put a ball through you, for you've been a-lyin' to me, Dick Wells."

"No, I haven't."

"Yes, you hev. You said you hadn't seen Kate seuce you left us last night at the shanty, and now you go and say that Tony was bound to swipe the bag."

"Well, it's all true; both's true," stammered Dick, scared almost out of his wits.

"You gosh danged little cub, I'll larn ye!" cried Jesse, raising the hand which held the pistol.

But Frank caught it and pulled it back.

"Go slow, brother, go slow," he said.

"Leggo of me, Frank. Yer always a-interferin'. Jest now you was at me for goin' too slow."

"But dogon it all, don't you see you're frightenin' the boy out'n what little wits he's got? Why in time can't you give him a chance to explain?"

"Let him explain if he can," growled Jesse.

"Now tell us what you meant, Dick," said Frank, in a more kindly voice.

"I didn't lie," replied Dick. "I—I s'pose I've got to own up. I saw Kate in the mornin'."

"You did!"

"Yes."

"What, before you went for the trunk?"

"Yes."

"And she had the money then?"

"Yes."

"How 'd she get it?"

"Her father gave it to her to keep. I was with her when he first came along."

"Great snakes!" exclaimed Jesse. "Now it's all comin' out."

"Tell us all about it," said Frank.

Dick felt himself the meanest kind of traitor for doing it, but he did not dare to refuse.

He told the story of his encounter with Kate on Rector street from beginning to end.

Jesse and Frank uttered exclamations of disgust.

"And to think that all the time we was a-watchin' that trunk at the ferry like a couple of dogoned idlots Tom was making off with the bag," exclaimed Frank. "Why he must hev' got at the trunk on the road and snaked it out somehow. I know blamed well it was in it at the start."

"I don't believe it," said Jesse. "He had checked the bag separate. The trunk was only a blind."

"Anyhow he got the best of us."

"I should say he did."

"What are we goin' to do, brother?"

"Just what we said," replied Jesse, in a whisper. "We'll go to Wixon's hotel and look up Joe. 'Twon't take us long. Meanwhile we'll leave the boy to wait for the gal to come back and find out what she knows."

"But can we trust him?"

"We've got to trust somebody."

"That's so. S'pose we show him the color of our money, and promise him more?"

"A good idea. We can't stay."

"Not much. If anything should happen that the chest in thar was opened, I'll be dogoned if I want to be reound."

"Bet yer life. Come, I'll try it."

"I would. I see no better way."

"Looker hyar, Dick," said Jesse, in that kindly tone that he knew how to assume so well at times, "I believe you're true blue, and I'm blamed sorry I was so rough with you. You've done us a big service, and you kin do more. We've got to leave now. I want you to stay here till noon, say, and see if the gal don't come back. Ef she does, find out what she knows, and meet us—let's see—say at one o'clock at Phil Johnson's saloon on the Bowery, just above Grand street. Phil's a Missourian and an old friend of mine. Will you do it? Say?"

"Yes."

Dick did not dare to say anything else.

"That's the talk. You won't go back on us?"

"No."

"O K. Here's a hundred dollars for what you have done already. Now, mind, it's a thousand altogether if we get that stuff back."

He drew out Old King Brady's wallet, which he had already examined and knew contained several hundred dollars, and handed a roll of bills to Dick.

Dick took the money.

Still he did not dare to refuse.

Beside that, he wanted the money.

But the moment the brothers had departed, which they did immediately, he felt thoroughly ashamed of what he had done.

"I've sold myself," he thought. "I've sold out for a hundred dollars. I'm just as bad as a thief."

He began walking up and down the room in mental agony.

Never had the voice of conscience troubled him as now.

Just at that moment Dick heard another voice which was certainly not the voice of his troubled conscience.

It came from beyond the door of the dark room.

"Hello! Hello, there!" it called. "I want to speak to you, Dick Wells!"

CHAPTER VIII.

JESSE GOES TO BAG THE BOODLE AND FINDS IT ALREADY BAGGED.

"FRANK, I'm gwinter bag thet ar boodle.

Now you kin bet your sweet life agin a bar'n of sour cider on that."

Thus, Jesse James, as in company with his brother, he stole from the hall door of the Baxter street tenement and hurried toward the shop of the Cohens, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Levy and Lazarus, all "originals" and the "only genuine," bent upon reaching Park Row—'twas Chatham street then—followed by a small but curious crowd.

Small in size—not in numbers.

The fact was the Baxter street boys were up and dressed by this time, and the Baxter street boys usually know a good thing when they see it.

"Buffalo Bill!" they shouted.

"Hey, fellers! Look at de cowboys!"

"Ketch onter his hair!"

"Oh, where did you get that hat?"

These are but a sample of the remarks which were flung after the brothers as they hurried down the street.

"Dogon it all, what kin we do?" whispered Frank.

"Nawthiu," replied Jesse laconically, "except to get out of hyer as soon as ever we can."

"Good tay, mine freund! Von leedle minute," exclaimed a wheedling voice at his elbow. "Dot goat id ess a goot von, but schust led me visper asegred—it ish not de style in Nyar Yorick."

"Let go of me, blast you!" roared Jesse.

It was the persuasive Mr. Lazarus Cohen—Old King Brady's acquaintance.

Like a watchful spider he had pounced out from the shadows of his colored silk linings and plucked the outlaw by the sleeve of the criticized coat.

"I gif you a good pargain for a shange!" he persisted. "Schust listen to reason. Dat goat—"

Biff—whack!

Then if ever Mr. Lazarus Cohn saw stars, for Jesse had taken him across the trade-mark with his brawny fist.

"Ha, ha! Ho, ho!" the admiring crowd of boys fairly yelled.

"Old Cohen got it dat time! Puck him, mister! Puck him in de eye. Mash his head! Give him another! Smash his snoot!"

Clearly it would have been useless for Mr. Lazarus Cohen to run for Congress from the Baxter street district on either ticket in the face of such unpopularity as this.

But Jesse, scorning the suggestions, caught Frank's arm and strode on, heedless alike of the noisy admiration of the boys and the anathemas which the discomfited Hebrew was hurling at his head.

"For goodness' sake let's get out of here, Frank," he whispered.

"What did you want to hit him for, you dogoned chump?" growled Frank.

"Hey, mister, what misenm are you at?" shouted one voice above all the rest, as they reached the corner at last.

There was a general shout at this.

It was just a shade too much for Jesse.

The bold and fearless outlaw of the Missouri oak groves felt that he had defied the world in vain to find himself now at the mercy of a band of boys.

But what could he do?

For once the small arsenal which he carried concealed about his person was useless.

The crowd was increasing every moment. He couldn't shoot them all, though if he had had a dynamite bomb to have hurled in their midst just then, it would have given him the greatest pleasure in the world.

"Looker hyar, this is tremendons!" whispered Frank. "We've got ter git outer this, Jess. Let's get aboard this car."

And in truth it was time, for the great and

only original Cohen was coming now, and following him was a choice selection of the Cohen tribe, specimens of every age, size and sex, shouting for the police and making matters very lively generally.

Frank and Jesse gave one wild dash into the street, and leaping upon an up-bound Third avenue car, were soon carried away from the trying scene.

"Did you ever see the beat, Frank?" panted Jesse, taking off his big white hat and wiping the perspiration from his steaming brow. "Dogon it all, I'd rather face six sheriffs and a hull regiment of ther Missouri militia than one sich crowd like that."

"He, he, he!" tittered the conductor.

"Haw, haw, haw!" snickered several men who stood on the platform of the car.

"What in thunder be you fellers grinnin' at?" roared Jesse. "I want you to understand—"

"Jess, Jess! Control yourself, for gracious sake!" whispered Frank, who was beginning to get seriously alarmed.

"But I ain't gwine ter stand hyer and be insulted!" snarled Jesse.

"That's all right."

"No, it ain't all right."

"Do you want to get us into trouble?"

"No."

"Then, dogon it all, hoid you tongue!"

"Which of the dime museums shall I let you out at, gentleman?" asked the conductor, winking at the men on the platform.

Jesse made no answer, but turned his back upon his tormentors and began conversing with his brother in low tones.

"I tell you what it is, Frank," he whispered. "I'm going to a barber's the first thing. I can't stand this nohow, and I won't."

"What do yer mean ter do?" asked Frank. "Not get shaved?"

"No, not that, but I'm gwinter get my har cut, and I'm gwinter get some city togs."

"S'pose I might ez well do ther same," growled Frank. "Nobuddy wants to make a blarsted show like we've been ever since we struck this town."

"That's it. Besides, it will be safer after what's happened this morning."

"Sh—sh—sh!" whispered Frank, warningly. For gracious sake don't, Jess. Will yer never onderstand that New York's a different place from St. Louis or Kansas City? Thar we could rally friends in a minute, but hyar we're nobuddy in the crowd."

This was a sad truth which Jesse was beginning to realize.

To continue as they were was only to attract attention, and the brothers soon left the car and paid a visit to a professor of the tonsonial art, and were shorn of their flowing locks.

Jesse bore the ordeal well, seeming to pay no heed to the grins and whispered remarks of the men in the shop.

After they had taken this step toward transforming themselves into respectable citizens, they started for the nearest clothing store.

"You didn't see the paper, I s'pose?" remarked Frank, as they left the shop.

"No; why?"

"It's full of Dutch Tom, thet's all. I was readln' while I waited for you."

"Yer don't mean it?"

"Yes. Ther thing's all out, and the perlice hev got ther body. They don't berlieve the old woman's story thet the James Boys did the shooting. They call it a mystery, and there's a hull grist of detectives workin' on ther ense all full of ther theories as usual."

"'Twon't hurt us none, Frank."

"Of course not. They're a stupld lot. Won't believe the truth when it's told to them. That

man Brady had forgot more in a minute than the hull kit and kaboodle av 'em will ever know."

"That's so. Thank goodness he'll never bother us again."

"I wish I could feel sure of that," said Frank. "I wouldn't go back to that house in Baxter street for a farm. Sooner or later the body will be found in the chest, and then—"

"An' then they'll be lookin' for the long haired cowboys, what were seen to leave the house," chuckled Jesse, "but they won't find 'em, brother."

"Come on, come on," urged Frank anxiously. "I shan't never rest till I get rid of these dogoned big hats."

The clothing store proved to be just the place for Frank's purpose.

After a little the brothers came out completely transformed.

But even now, Frank did not appear to be satisfied. His face wore a most uncomfortable expression as they walked along.

"I'm sick, Jess," he said. "I may as well own up first ez last."

"Sick!" cried Jesse in terror. "For goodness sake, Frank, don't tell me that!"

"But I am. I've got an awful pain in my stomach. Let's get to Phil Johnston's. I've got to lie down and get some rest."

Here was an unexpected complication.

Before the brothers reached the saloon Frank was very much worse.

Johnston, the proprietor, recognized them instantly, having known them in Missouri in former days.

"Phew!" he cried. "I was readin' something about you in the paper this morning, Jesse James."

"I s'pose likely," growled Jesse. "Shootin' over in Brooklyn, warn't it?"

"Yes. They said you were in New York, but I couldn't believe it."

"You see it's true though."

"I should say so. You've altered, Jess, but I knowed you ther very fust minute you showed yer face in the door."

"Looker hyar, Phil, we're safe at your place, I s'pose?"

"Yes, yes."

"Frank's sick. Kin you give us a room?"

"Sure. Stay ez long as you like. What's the matter, Frank?"

"Blamed ef I know," replied Frank, who appeared to be in great pain.

"I'll get you to bed right off and send out for a doctor and some whisky for you," said the saloon keeper, sympathetically.

"Send out fer whisky? What yer talkin' about?" snapped Jesse. "Hain't your blame crib full of it? I'm dry ez a fish—give us a drink now, Phil."

"Wouldn't advise Frank to drink none of it though," said Johnson. "I never drink anything myself, but I usually keep some good stuff for my friends. Happen to be all out jest now."

"What! ain't yer licker good?"

"No, it's blame bad. Couldn't sell nothing else here on the Bowery. These duffers want something what'll chaw their inards all up az it goes down."

"Well, let's get Frank inter bed and get something decent to drink as soon as ever we can," said Jesse. "He didn't sleep none these two nights, and mebbe that's what ails him. I wish we wuz safe back in Missouri, I swar I do. Nev-reen sich a blame mean place ez this. By ther way, Phil, along about noontime, a boy will inquire for me. Ef I ain't hyar, hold him till I come."

But this proved one of the days when every-

thing went just the reverse of what was expected.

Jesse never saw Wixon's hotel until long after the sun went down.

Frank was very sick all day, so sick that a doctor had to be sent for. Toward night he grew easier, but found himself entirely unable to leave the bed.

Jesse felt seriously alarmed.

Anxious as he was about the money he would not leave his brother, but remained close to his side all day.

Noon came and passed, but it brought no Dick Wells.

"Sucked in," thought Jesse. "Everything is upside down. I knowed how it would be if we trusted that thar boy."

When the evening paper came out he looked anxiously along its columns expecting to find something said about the discovery of the body of Old King Brady.

There was no mention of the old detective's name, however.

Jesse could think of but one explanation.

"The boy must have lit right out with the money I give him," he thought, "and the gal never came back. I'm afraid the hull game is busted owin' to this infernal delay."

This was about six o'clock, and Frank was asleep.

Jesse hated to disturb him, and he remained by his bedside until as late as nine o'clock, on pins and needles, as the saying goes.

At last Frank opened his eyes and feebly asked for a drink.

"Better?" inquired Jesse, passing him some weak whisky and water.

"Yes, I think so. Gosh, Jesse, it gave me a tough old twist that time. Thought I wuz a goner sure."

"Oh, 'twon't amount to nothin'. You'll be all right in ther mornin'."

"I hope so," sighed Frank. "What time is it?"

"Nine o'clock at night."

"Great snakes! didn't know I'd been asleep ten minutes. What luck did you have?"

"Luck? What yer mean? Thar hain't been no luck sense we left the West."

"Hain't you seen Joe?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Couldn't leave you."

Frank swore like a plrate.

"You dogoned fool! you mlighter knowed I druther hev yer!" he wound up at last.

"An' that's all the thanks a feller gets!" growled Jesse. "Wal, hy time! thar's no sich thing as satisfyin' you, Frank James."

"Go, now! Go righter away, quick!" cried Frank. "Don't stay chinnin' about one single dogoned moment. By this time Joe Hart has started back for St. Louis, I make no doubt. Oh, Jess, ef the world only knowed you as I know you they wouldn't make such a fuss over yer. It's an awful cuss to hev a brother thet's a fool!"

"Oh, yer off yer base. Yer don't know what yer sayin'," muttered Jesse, as he started to leave the room.

"Hold on!" called Frank. "Did thet boy come?"

"No."

"I knowed he wouldn't."

"Thet's cool," snapped Jesse; "and you was the very one what advised the move. Good-bye, Frank; I'll find yer in better humor when I come back."

And, in truth, Jesse was in pretty bad humor himself when he left Phil Johnston's. He was in worse when he came out of Wixon's hotel.

His cousin had departed.

Not for Missouri, however, for he had left his things behind him.

All the satisfaction Jesse got was in learning that a party by the name of Joseph Hart was stopping there. He had come the evening previous, and had no sooner had a room assigned to him than he proceeded to get blazing drunk, and had been in that condition pretty much ever since.

He had been out all night, the clerk said, coming in at about six in the morning in such shape that he had to be carried up-stairs.

He had remained in bed until dinner time, and since then had stuck pretty close to the har-room. After supper he had gone out again. And up to the time of writing had not returned.

"Most likely he'll be took in to-night," said the clerk, cheerfully. "He'd a-been scooped last night, sure, only for a young feller helping him to the door here. The same chap was here inquiring for him this evening, but it was after he'd gone out."

"What sort of a lookin' feller was he?" inquired Jesse, anxiously.

"Oh, I can't describe him very well. Short, thick set, light hair, don't remember the color of his eyes. He looked to me as though he might be Dutch, and I guess he was."

"Tony Cornshaster," muttered Jesse. "What can it mean?"

He felt very anxious.

When he read Tony's letter he had scarcely believed the talk about restoring the money to its rightful owner. He had looked upon the whole thing simply as a blind for Kate.

Now it began to look as if Tony meant what he said; that he actually was in communication with the defaulting cashier.

Jesse could not understand the business at all, and the more he thought it over the more mixed up he got.

Upon one thing, however, he found that he had ample reason to congratulate himself.

His personal appearance no longer attracted attention.

No one paid the slightest heed to him, as he paced up and down in front of the hotel.

He had determined to stand guard until midnight, at least in the hope that his cousin might come back.

At last came his reward.

Somewhere between twelve and one o'clock along came the cashier as drunk as a lord, and went staggering into the hotel.

Jesse did not attempt to speak to him in the street. Shrewdly he resolved to follow him up to his room.

No one paid the least attention to either of them.

The hotel was a low one, and conducted in the interest of drunkards—of the more respectable sort—besides, fortunately for Jesse's purpose, another clerk had gone on duty since his previous call.

Once inside the office Hart steered for the stairs, making anything but a bee-line, but reaching there at last.

As he stumbled up Jesse followed.

It was well that he did so.

The inebriated cashier had scarcely reached the first landing when he fell headlong. But for Jesse he would to a certainty have rolled down-stairs.

Quick as thought the outlaw had him up and backed against the wall beneath a flickering gas burner.

"Joe! Joe!" he whispered. "Brace up, Joe! Don't you know me? It's Jess."

The mere mention of that dreaded name seemed to have its effect upon Mr. Hart.

"Jess! For the Lord sake!" he muttered thick-

ly. "It is Jess though! Say, Jess, give us back that money or I'm a ruined man."

"Sh! Sh!" breathed Jesse, "we mustn't talk about it here. Whar's yer room, Joe?"

"No. 10."

"This floor."

"Yesh."

"Got ther key?"

"Nopel. Forgot it. I'll go down an' get it, Jess. Come on, ole feller, le's have a drink."

"We'll get inter the room and ring for drinks," said Jesse, anxiously. "You mustn't go down again to-night, Joe."

"But how in time are we going ter get into the room when I haven't got the key? Jess, you didn't orter be a fool."

"Keep your shirt on. I'll fix that," whispered Jesse, who had spied the button of an electric bell near them.

He rang and a hall boy appeared.

"Get me the key to No. 10, bub," he said. "This gentleman's sick."

"He's been sick all day, and was wuss las' night," tittered the boy.

"I'll break your head, you little wretch!" bawled Hart, making a rush; but Jesse seized him and pushed him back against the wall.

In a minute the boy was back with the key, and with his help Jesse got the cashier into the room.

"Is he a friend of yours, sir?" asked the boy.

"Bes' friend I've got in the world!" cried the cashier, thickly. "Ain't thet so, Jess?"

"Yes, yes. I say, boy, here's a dollar for you. Don't say nothin' about this. I'll stay with him to-night and see that he sobers up in the mornin'."

"Oh, 'tain't none of my business, only the old man's a-kickin'. There's been so many after him and so much fuss."

"So many after him! There was a young feller here early in the evenin', and—"

"And an old feller later."

"That was me."

"No, 'twasn't you nuther. I seen you fust off when you come. There was an old feller before you. He was here two or three times, but every time this gentleman happened to have stepped out for a drink."

"Describe the man!" said Jesse, anxiously.

"Hello! Are you going to stay all night, you Billy?" called a voice from the hall.

"I must skip! There's the boss!" cried the boy in a frightened whisper.

He was through the door and off before Jesse could raise a finger to prevent.

"Dogon it! I dassent follow him up," muttered Jesse.

A groan from Hart now called his attention to the bed.

"Jess, Jess! I'm awful bad!"

"What ails you, Joe?"

"I'm bad—wicked. I ortener lent you that money, Jess, an' me a church member, too. Oh, I ortener done it. Give it back, Jess; give it back."

"How can I glve back what I ain't got?" answered Jesse. "Looker hyar, Joe."

"What?"

"You're tryin' to humbug me. You've got that money yourself."

"No, No."

"You-hev! You know you hev."

"No, no, Jess, I heven't. You've got it, hain't yer? There was a man what said he was goin' ter got it. Les' see—what's this his name is—Brady—Old King Brady."

"Old King Brady! Then 'twas you who gavo Old King Brady the steer, Joo Hart! I've a good mind ter—"

"In his rage, Jesse had half drawn his revolver, but the sleepy, idiotic expression upon his

cousin's face showed him the condition he was in.

"I'll kill him for this when he's sober," he thought, "but I can't shoot Joe Hart when he's drunk and can't help himself. I can't do that, nohow, by gosh!"

"Joe, say, Joo," he called, "I wanter to talk to you. Brace up, Joe."

"Can't."

"You must."

"Can't, I tell yer."

His eyes were closing already, and his breath came heavily.

In another moment, in spite of all Jesse's efforts, the defaulting cashier of the East Meridian bank was sound asleep.

Jesse was in despair.

"What in the name of sense am I to do?" he muttered. "Joe's a perfect lump when he's drunk. Can't do nothin' with him. He can't have got the boodle or he'd a lit out afore this."

This seemed very certain.

Jesse searched the room thoroughly, but could discover nothing belonging to his cousin except his overcoat and black gripsack.

Be sure the gripsack was overhauled, but there was nothing but clothes in that.

"Flames and furies! Something's got to be did," muttered the outlaw. "I'll be blest ef I know whar ter begin. Wonder who thet older feller was the boy was tellin' about? Wisht I hed the nerve to go down to the office and inquire, but I hain't. Luck's been dead agin me to-day."

The only solution to the mystery he could think of was that it must be some one of Old King Brady's assistants, and who had been instructed to watch the cashier.

Suppose he were to suddenly appear now?

Jesse began to think it was about time for him to be getting out.

In his native wilds, in the small western cities even, this man was in his element, but here in the great metropolis he was lost—simply lost.

He had involved himself in serious complications. Enemies appeared to be lurking everywhere.

Another man, and one less bold, would have given up in despair, and taken the first train for Missouri.

Jesse James, however, although confused and perplexed, had not the faintest notion of giving up.

He was only puzzled to determine what was best to do.

"He's fixed thar for a couple of hours anyway," he muttered. "Meanwhile I guess I'd better get back to Frank."

He was just about to pick up his hat, which he had removed upon entering the room, when he suddenly heard uncertain footsteps moving along the hall.

It sounded for all the world as though another drunkard were making for the door of No. 10.

In a moment all doubt on this score was removed, for there came a sharp, sudden crash.

Some one had pitched forward and fallen heavily against the door.

"Great gosh!" breathed Jesse.

He stepped to the door and, grasping the knob with one hand, pressed the other against the panel, and bent forward in a listening attitude.

"Say, say, Mister Hart, say, let a feller in, won't yer?" he heard a thick voice calling. "I've got the boodle in a bag. I don't want it; I'm a Christian now. It won't be nothing but a cuss to me; I wanter givo it up."

"Tony Cohnschaster, by all that's bad!" muttered the outlaw.

A smile of peculiar malignancy stole over his face as he turned the knob of the door.

Jesse threw the door of No. 10 wide open, and looked out into the hall.

His gaze did not have to wander far.

There, upon the floor directly in front of him, was a young man straddling on all fours, vainly endeavoring to rise, and there, also, lay a black grip-sack, not unlike Mr. Hart's, flat upon its side.

Jesse seized the bag first and flung it into the room.

He then grabbed the fellow by the collar and drew him after shutting and locking the door.

"Look here—what yer doin'?" cried the young man, staggering to his feet and staring at the outlaw with an expression of terror. "You ain't Mr. Hart!"

He was a short, thick-set person, with flaxen hair, a full, round, German face, and a pair of dull, fishy eyes.

The shock had gone a long way toward sobering him. It was plain to see that he was scared half out of his wits.

"Not much!" breathed Jesse. "But you are Dutch Tom's son, Tony. I know you."

He seized the bag and wrenched it open in spite of such resistance as was offered by the apology for a lock.

An expression of joy, mingled with triumph, passed over his face.

Inside the bag was a big package; inside the package was bundle upon bundle of bank-notes secured with paper straps.

"Is it all hyar, you rascal?" cried Jesse. "Hev you kept any of it, say?"

"Who—who are you?" stammered Tony, his face as white as the wall.

"I'm a detective."

"Oh, I knowed it. For God sake, mister, let up on me. I've been on the island three times. I—I don't wanter go again."

"Tell the truth, then—is the money all hyar?"

"Yes, yes! Every dollar of it. I—I didn't steal it. I'm a Christian. Ask 'em down to the Bowery Mission. My—my father stole it—I only took it to glve to its right owner—that gent asleep there in the bed."

"Wal, I can't bring myself to think there's sich a soft-headed fool in the world," sneered Jesse; "no, thar ain't nothin' else for me to believe except that you lie!"

"No, no. I'm a-tellin' the truth."

"Where dld you fall in with this man?" demanded Jesse, sternly.

"I—I met him on the Bowery, mister," enveled Tony, bracing himself against the foot-board of the bed and wiping his eyes.

"Drunk?"

"Bilin'."

"Dld yer know him?"

"Oh, no. I jest took holder him to keep him from bein' ran in."

"When was this?"

"Yesterday, toward evenin'."

"What did yer do then?"

"Well, we had a drink. He told me all about this here money belng stole by ther James Boys. Then I knowd."

"Yer knowd what?"

"That Kate—that's my sister, sir—I knowd that Kate had it. My father was one of the James Boys gang, yon see?"

"I understand. And you went straight to Baxter street and collared the money."

"No, I didn't."

"What then?"

"I—I'd collared it a'ready. I found out Kate had got it, and I put up a job on her—sent a feller to tell her I was run over, and when she came out, I slipped in and collared the stuff."

"And left that letter in the sugar bowl?"
 Tony's eyes opened wide.
 "You know all about it—there ain't no use in my tellin' you," he whimpered. "No, I put that letter there afterward."
 "Where's Kate now?"
 "I d'n'know. I hain't been back sence."
 "Well, of all things! What made you bring the money hyar?"

"Because my conscience smit me. I was goin' to skip for California, but I stopped in the prayer-meeting at the mission, and heard a beeyutiful prayer made by one of the brothers. It suit me, and I made up my mind I do the right thing, so—so—"

"So what?"
 "I went and got the money and brung it here. Say, mister, won't yer let me go?"

"No!" hissed Jesse. "You shan't go, but I shall. You'll stay here."

"What!" cried Tony, opening his eyes again. "Ain't you a detective?"

Evidently Tony was beginning to smell a large sized rat.

"Get over in that corner, breathed Jesse, displaying his revolver.

"Good Lord!" cried Tony. "I do believe you're a crook yerself."

"Shut up! Hold up your hands or I'll shoot you."

Tony tremblingly obeyed. As quickly as possible Jesse pulled the quilt and sheets from beneath the body of his unconscious cousin and proceeded to tie them about Tony's arms and legs, fastening their ends around one of the head posts of the bedstead.

"Thar! That 'll hold you for a few minutes anyhow," he hissed. "Now for something to keep your jaw quiet. Gimme yer handkerchief."

Tony had none, it proved, so Jesse took his own and jammed it half way down the throat of the frightened youth.

"Thar! That fixes you!" he exclaimed. "Now then, Tony Cornshaster, ef you dare to make a move under half an hour I'll kill yer if I have to hunt New York from one end to the other to find yer out. Mind! You'll be dead as your treacherous father. Mebbe you don't know who I am—look sharp at me. I am Jesse James!"

Tony's face was a study.

It is hard to tell what the result might have been if he had been free to use his lungs.

Jesse waited for nothing further.

Picking up the bag he passed out of the door, locking it upon the outside.

"Now to get out of this," he muttered. "I hate to resk it goin' by the office—ef thar was only some back way."

His eyes rested upon a window at the end of the hall, and he moved warily toward it.

Peering out, he saw that it opened upon a low shed, from the roof of which to the ground could not be more than ten feet at most.

Behind the back yard he could see that there was an alley by means of which he could no doubt gain the street.

"Just the very thing," he muttered. "Luck has turned."

He flung up the sash, and was about to step through the window, when all at once he was startled at seeing a man rise up in the opening.

A determined face, gray hair, keen eyes beneath a big hat—there they all were. There also was a glittering revolver pointed directly at his head.

Jesse gave a gasp of horror.

"Old King Brady!" he exclaimed, starting back and letting fall the bag in his excitement.

"Old King Brady or his ghost!"

CHAPTER IX.

IN AND OUT.

"HELLO! Hello! Hello, Dick Wells! I want to speak to you! Hello!"

No wonder Dick found himself startled by the sound of this mysterious voice.

He had believed himself alone after the James Boys took their departure, and he was just trying to think whether he had better fulfill his agreement and remain where he was or make tracks out of the house, when the voice made itself heard.

Now if it had been night Dick might have had his superstitious terrors aroused and thought of ghosts, but it was broad daylight and that was where the strange part of it came in.

Positively there was no one in the room with him—we speak of the kitchen. Dick looked into the dark room and could see no one there either, and it was just the same when he looked in the closet, under the bed and out into the hall.

Meanwhile, the cry had been repeated twice.

"Hello!" came the voice now a third time. "Come into the dark room! Don't be frightened. Come!"

"Who are you and where are you?" stammered Dick.

"Are you alone?" asked the voice.

"Yes, yes."

"Well, then, look in the big chest!"

"In the chest?"

"Yes. They have shut me up there!"

"But who are you?"

"I'll tell you after I get out. Help me to get out. I should have smothered long ago only for a knothole—that's what I'm calling through now."

"Geel! You don't say so. You take my breath away. I can see your eye shining at the hole."

"Open the chest! Open the chest!"

Dick leaped to the chest and tried to raise the lid.

Of course the nails driven in by Frank held it fast.

"You can't do it that way," said the voice, quietly. "You will have to get the hammer. It must be in the kitchen by the stove."

Filled with wonder and most curious to know who the prisoner could be, Dick ran out into the kitchen and got the hammer.

Soon he was pounding away like a good fellow, but he could not raise the lid of the chest.

"I'm afraid I can't manage it, Mister," he cried; "hadn't I better run for a cop? With an axe we might bust the lid in, if we only had one."

"No, don't do it; at least, not yet. If it can possibly be helped, I don't want anybody but you, Dick Wells."

"But what can I do?"

"Go into the kitchen and get a few sticks of kindling wood. Have you got a knife?"

"Yes, yes."

"Get the wood, then, and be quick. After that I'll tell you what to do."

Dick obeyed.

"Got it?" called the voice, as he returned.

"Yes."

"Cut the stick up into wedges."

"I'll do it."

"Be quick!"

"I'll be as quick as I can," replied Dick, adding presently:

"They are ready now."

"Good!" called the voice. "How many?"

"Four."

"Probably enough. Now drive them in under the lid and it will start the nails."

No doubt the people on the floor below heard the tremendous hammering which followed, but they did not seem to concern themselves about it for no one came.

"Go on! Go on! You've started it!" called the voice.

A sharp, cracking sound told Dick that the wedges were doing their work.

He continued to rain blows upon them, first on one side, then on another.

A moment more and the work was done.

A tall, gray-haired man immediately rose up from the inside of the closet and confronted Dick.

"Old King Brady the detective!" gasped the boy.

"It isn't anyone else," replied the man, coolly, stepping out of the chest. "Boy, is the outer door locked?"

"Ye—yes."

"And bolted?"

"Yes—yes."

"Good! Now we are safe. The James Boys will not come back here."

Dick trembled. He did not feel quite so sure.

"I suppose you would like to know how I got in there?" asked Old King Brady, coolly brushing the dust from his clothes.

"I—I don't know. You have taken all the starch out of me, mister."

"I have, eh? Well, by gracious, you've got nothing to complain about, boy. Those two rascals came mighty near taking all the life out of me. Look here."

As he spoke the detective produced his pocket lantern, lighted it, and held it down into the bottom of the chest.

He now drew out the old clothes which covered the bottom, shaking them carefully as he did so. Presently something hard fell upon the floor.

Old King Brady clapped his foot upon it and stopped it as it was rolling beneath the bed.

"What is it?" asked Dick.

"Pick it up."

"By gracious! it's a bullet!"

"Exactly. It came from Jesse James' pistol. It was shot at me after I was put into the chest."

"And never hit you?"

"Fortunately not. If I had not pretended to be hit, though, I would have got another. I made them believe I was dead."

"Great Scott!" said Dick. "I can hardly believe it."

"I could hardly believe it myself. It went beneath my arms and my body. It was the closest call I ever had, and I've had lots of them in my time."

"They thought you was dead and nailed you up?"

"That was it."

"And you've been here all the time?"

"I should say so. How would I be anywhere else?"

Dick turned red and looked confused.

"I—I suppose you heard everything that was said," he stammered.

"Every word."

"That's the way you got on to my name?"

"That's the way. You are the boy I saw in that shanty over in Brooklyn. I thought you were a friend of the James Boys then, but I know better now."

"I—I thought you'd have me down for their friend now."

"No. I understand it all. You drove the express wagon that carried that trunk out to Buffalo avenue. The James Boys captured you."

"Yes. Yes. That was it. I tell you honestly, mister, I didn't want to have anything to do with them, but I couldn't help it."

"I understand. Whose express?"

"Slapman's."

"Have you told Mr. Slapman about it?"

"Yes, and he bounced me. It's been a bad job for me all around."

"Except when you got that hundred dollars from Jesse. That ought to make up."

"I—I was afraid to refuse it," stammered Dick. "Here, you take the money. If you'll help me, Mr. Brady, I'll be only too glad to keep away from those fellows. They'd have killed me if I hadn't done just what I did."

"There's very little doubt about that. Who fired the shot that killed Dutch Tom?"

"You mean the man in the shanty—Cohnschaster?"

"Yes, of course."

"The long-faced one."

"Frank?"

"Yes, but I believe it was an accident, Mr. Brady. Honest, I do."

"Nonsense! Here, let me have that money. Well, this is mine—I know this torn bill—I suspected as much."

"Yours?"

"Yes. They disarmed me and went through my pockets before you came in. Yes, this money is mine."

"Well, I don't want it anyhow," said Dick, with a sigh.

"Here's twenty dollars," said the detective, passing Dick four of the five dollar bills.

"What's it for?"

"It's for you—for expenses. The James Boys made you promise to help them. Do you feel bound by that promise?"

"No, no."

"Then I engage you to help me. Once before I succeeded in recovering stolen bank funds from these rascals and I propose to do it again."

"But you can't!" exclaimed Dick, receiving the bills with some reluctance. "Tony Cohnschaster has the money. Most likely he's had it all night. By this time he's skipped."

"I don't feel so sure of that. What sort of a fellow is this Tony?"

"Oh, he's a bad one."

"Drinks?"

"Like a fish at times; at other times he's pious. He's no good at all."

"Where does he hold out when he's on the booze?"

"I don't know, but most likely Kate does."

"Ah, Kate! Where is that girl now?"

"I'm sure I haven't the faintest idea, unless she went out to see her father after she found the money was stolen, to tell him that it was gone."

"Probably that's where she did go, and probably she will return soon. Now see here, Dick Wells."

"What is it?"

"I can depend on you?"

"Oh, yes."

"That is unless the James Boys come back here and scare you, and I don't anticipate that."

"Do you want me to stay here and wait for Kate?"

"You've hit it. I want you to do just what Jesse told you to do. If Kate comes tell her all. Find out Tony's haunts, and try and find Tony. Then call the first policeman, and have him arrested. After that come to me. Here I'll give you something to help you out."

Tearing a leaf from his memorandum book Old King Brady wrote hastily:

"Arrest any one whom this boy may order."

"BRADY."

"That will do the business," he said. "Any officer on the force will respect that."

"And where shall I find you?"

"That's hard to say. You can leave word for me at my office in the Headquarters, on Mulberry street. I suppose you know where that is?"

"Oh, yes; but—"

"But what?"

"Suppose the James Boys come back?"

"That will be all right. I shall send an officer here at once. Tell Kate that her brother stole the money from the chest. Tell her that he left a letter saying that he was going to return it to a Mr. Hart, cashier of the Missouri bank, from which it was stolen. Say also that he said in the letter that he was going away and she would never see him again."

"Dear me! Was there really such a letter?"

"Yes; it was found by the James Boys in a sugar-bowl in that closet. I heard it read. Now I'm off. Expect the officer inside of two minutes. Keep cool; have your wits about you. I have confidence in you, young man. You are in a serious scrape. In any case, you stand liable to be held as a witness to that Brooklyn murder. You know what that means."

"House of Detention," shuddered Dick. "Yes, I know."

"And you want to avoid that. You will if you follow my directions. Now I'm off—this time for a fact."

And he went, leaving Dick Wells, to employ his own expression, all broken up.

Presently the policeman came in.

He was a big, hulking fellow, full of curiosity.

He tried his best to pump Dick, but did not accomplish much, for the boy was sharp enough to hold his tongue.

By and by the policeman pulled out a pipe and began to smoke, leaving Dick pretty much to his own reflections.

Between smoking and talking the hours of daylight passed, and still no step was heard upon the stairs.

Nightfall came at last, and still no sign of Kate.

Dick's patience was almost exhausted.

He longed to leave the place, to be actively engaged in something. Besides he was awfully hungry. To be sure the policeman had gone out and bought sandwiches and beer, but sandwiches are not filling, especially when the bread is stale and the ham moldy with no mustard to help them down, and as for beer, that was something that Dick never would drink at all.

Six o'clock struck, and still no Kate, but before the hand got round to seven there was a light step on the stair, and in a moment the girl entered the room.

She looked pale and distressed, and started back at sight of the officer with some show of terror.

"Dick Wells! Is it you?" she exclaimed.

Dick drew her aside and hastened to explain.

Kate was horrified.

"The James Boys here in my room! Those terrible James Boys!" she exclaimed. "If I had ever suspected such a thing I should never have dared to come back in the world!"

"It's lucky you did, though. Dear me, Kate, I got so tired of waiting for you. Where have you been?"

"Out to my aunt's. You know all, Dick. Poor father was murdered last night."

"He is dead, then?"

"Yes, oh, yes!"

Kate began to weep.

"He told me the last thing to say to you to keep that money, Kate," said Dick, slowly. "I tell you because he made me promise, but—but—"

"Oh, I would never do it!" cried Kate, her bright, honest eyes sparkling through her tears. "I would never do it, Dick Wells—never, never! You know me better than that."

"Of course I do."

"Tony got the money, Dick. I ought to have minded what you told me, but, like a fool, I didn't. I put the money in that big chest, and he saw me do it. While I was out on a wild goose chase he came in and stole it. Ah! I am sure it was him!"

"He sent word that he had been run over, didn't he?" asked Dick.

"Yes, yes! How did you know?"

Dick told about the letter.

"He must have sneaked in and left the letter after I had started for Brooklyn," said Kate. "Oh, Dick, it's terrible! Do you suppose he really will take the money back to that man it belongs to?"

"Do you think he will, Kate?"

"I'm sure he will not, unless—"

"Unless what?"

"Unless some of those people up at the mission happen to get hold of him and learn the truth."

"Would he be likely to go them?"

"He might. Tony is a curious mixture. Just as soon as he takes a drink or two he begins to get religious. He's almost sure to go there when he's drunk."

"Now that's just what Old King Brady wants to get at!" cried Dick. "Kate, I've promised to help find Tony and you must help me."

"But he'll be arrested."

"That can't be helped, Kate."

"Still, he is my brother, Dick. I can't forget that."

"Kate, he's better off in prison than anywhere else."

"Perhaps he is."

"There! he has to keep sober, and—"

"It don't make any difference!" interrupted Kate, decidedly. "Right is right, and wrong is wrong. The money was stolen and ought to be given back to the bank."

"And you will help me, Kate!" exclaimed Dick, made ashamed of his former weakness by the prompt decision of the girl.

"Yes. We must find Tony, Dick Wells."

"How are we going to do it?"

"I don't know, but we must do it."

"Shall we start now?"

"At once."

"Sure an you've got the best of it, young feller; your watch is over," said the policeman, who had been an attentive listener. "I've got to stay here all night."

Dick laughed.

"Make yourself as comfortable as you can, sir," said Kate. "This is only a poor place, but everything is at your service."

"Thank you, Miss. It will go agin me, but if your brother comes I'll have to arrest him."

"You can't do anything else, sir; but he won't come."

"Let us go!" cried Dick. "We've wasted time enough already. Every moment makes a difference."

"Stop a minute till I get my accordeon," said Kate.

She hurried over to the bureau and took the instrument from the lower drawer.

"Now I'm ready, Dick Wells," she said.

And they went out.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE BOWERY AND ELSEWHERE.

It was not a pleasant night.

Far from it.

The snow, which never stays long in New York, as everybody knows, was beginning to melt already. The gutters were running like mill races and the slippery sidewalks were covered with half frozen mud and slush.

As Kate and Dick turned into the famous Bowery—the street of streets—from Park Row, the latter thought he had never seen it look so dirty and so desolate or the crowd so small.

"Have you any idea where to go, Kate?" asked Dick.

"Oh, yes, I know a good many places that Tony goes when he's drunk."

"You feel sure he's drunk then?"

"Of course. Do you think for a moment he'd keep sober with all that money in his possession? You don't know him! He wouldn't be Tony and do that."

"Where are you going first?"

"To the Bowery Mission."

"Where's that?"

"Oh, it's up near Bleecker street. Sooner or later Tony will be sure to go there."

"Then you don't think he's left the city, as the letter said?"

"Well, it's hard to tell. He may have done so. It's a good while since he wrote the letter. I'm sure about one thing though. He wouldn't go without having one good drunk."

"But don't you think the possession of so much money might change him?"

"It might. It would be sure to change anyone else, but Tony is very weak."

"How do you suppose he found out who the money belonged to?"

"I'm sure I can't imagine. He couldn't have known when he stole it."

"Was he drunk when you told him about it?"

"He'd been drinking."

"Oh, Kate, what made you tell him?"

"Because I was a fool. My idea is that he met this Mr. Hart in some saloon."

The reader is already aware how close this theory was to the truth.

When Dick and Kate reached the mission they learned from the gentleman in charge something which startled them.

Tony had been there in the morning very drunk and very religious. He had left with the gentleman a new black gripsack, which he charged him to take care of. Not more than half an hour before he had called comparatively sober. He had then taken the gripsack, and bid everybody good-bye, stating that he was going to California.

"He said further," added the gentleman, "that he had had some money left him, and he gave me a hundred dollars for the benefit of the mission. I hope there's nothing wrong, miss."

"Everything is wrong!" cried Kate. "You know my brother here, and you ought to know by this time that he's not to be trusted. He has not a dollar to his name."

"Was the money stolen?"

"Yes."

"Dear me!"

"You might have guessed it."

"Tony is a bad fellow, I'm afraid. We've tried to make a man of him, but——"

"But you'll never succeed!" exclaimed Dick. "Come, Kate!"

And they hurriedly left the place.

"Those people are frauds," said Dick.

"No, no. They are good, but they don't understand people like Tony."

"What shall we do now?"

"I'm sure I don't know what to do, except to go from saloon to saloon."

"We ain't far behind him."

"That's plain. There is only one thing better I can think of."

"And that is?"

"For me to go playtng in front of the saloons as usual. If Tony is on the Bowery to-night, he'll be sure to pass us sooner or later. Do you mind?"

"Why should I mind?"

"Oh, I shall want you to pass round the hat. You'll have to keep with me."

"Of course I will."

"You ain't ashamed to be seen with a street singer?"

"I should never be ashamed to be seen near you, Kate. I only wish I had a good job?"

"Why? What has that got to do with it?"

"Why, then we'd go into partnership, and I'd be able to keep near you for the rest of my life."

"Bother! Don't talk silly, Dick Wells. Why, you're only a boy."

"And you are only a girl, Kate, but you are the dearest girl in all the world to me—have been for some time."

"That's sentimental rubbish," laughed Kate, tossing her pretty head. "Come, I've heard enough of it. I'm going to start up here."

They were in front of one of the most noted saloons on the Bowery now.

Kate took her stand at the curb with Dick beside her. Taking the accordion from under her arm, she began to play, accompanying the music with her voice, which was wonderfully sweet and as clear as a bell.

The song she sung was a popular one, and in everybody's mouth.

Dick joined in the chorus, and as their voices blended in agreeable harmony, the passers-by paused to listen.

Soon quite a crowd had gathered, and when Dick passed his hat around, the pennies and nickels dropped into it thick and fast.

As he moved about among the crowd, Dick kept a sharp eye open for Tony, but although they remained there singing for fully half an hour, nothing of that religious young rascal was seen.

And yet he was not far away.

Only on the next block in a low "gin mill," filling himself up with bad whisky and surrounded by an admiring crowd, throwing his money about right and left like a lord.

Had the wretches who drank at his expense but dreamed of the—to them—vast wealth which the black grip-sack, to which Tony clung so tightly contained, it would have been all day with the young inebriate.

But Tony had something of his father about him.

In other words he was not as big a fool as he looked.

He told every one that he was sick of New York, and that a friend had given him money to go to California.

And they believed him, and never imagined for an instant that the bag contained anything but old clothes.

There was another strange thing about Tony.

He never got very drunk.

It seemed to be impossible for him to drink enough to take away all consciousness.

No matter what quantity of the vile stuff he poured down Tony Cohnschaster could still keep his feet.

Thus he drank and drank until midnight was near, passing from one saloon to another, narrowly missing Dick and Kate several times, but never once crossing their path.

After a time the repentant fit seized this strange fellow.

Need we tell the result?

No; it has already been told.

And this brings us back to Wixon's Hotel and the James Boys again?

Old King Brady's sudden appearance at the window had startled Jesse terribly.

No wonder the outlaw thought it was a ghost.

Had he not shot the detective in the chest and nailed him up afterward?

For any ordinary mortal such a proceeding would have been more than sufficient, but for Old King Brady it was evidently not enough.

"Up with your hands, Jesse James! I've got the drop on you this time!" cried the detective.

This was another blunder.

Old King Brady ought to have known the outlaw better than to have supposed that he would ever throw up his hands for a living man.

No, Jesse James would have died sooner than do that.

He belonged to a race who draw and shoot. The first man who shoots is generally the man who don't get shot.

Old King Brady should have realized that this, was a time for action—not for words.

Crack! crack!

It was Jesse's revolver that spoke.

Bang! bang!

Old King Brady's answered.

Nothing but good luck and a bad light saved either of them.

As it was, the shots flew wide of the mark.

Jesse uttered a fierce imprecation and made a leap to regain the grip-sack.

Old King Brady sprang upon him, firing again, while from the rooms along the corridor a dozen heads came popping out, only to pop in again as suddenly when they caught sight of them two men struggling, heard the crack of the revolvers, and the hiss of the flying shots.

Then in an instant, when they looked again, the two men had vanished, and all that remained of the excitement was a piteous voice heard from one of the rooms calling for help.

This was Tony, of course.

Meanwhile the rattle of the shots was heard again—this time in the back yard.

And again it was all good powder wasted.

Never had the aim of Old King Brady or the bandit king been as bad as it was that night.

There had been a fierce struggle over the bag in the corridor as the door flew open.

Old King Brady captured it.

To shoot at the detective then and there would have been risky, and Jesse sprang to the window and fired, recording another miss.

Out of the window he leaped, gained the shed, and jumped to the ground.

"Bang!" went the detective's pistol as he pnt after him, clutching the bag which he knew contained the stolen funds.

But how did he know this?

What, it is perfectly proper to ask, had Old King Brady been about all day?

About his business, of course. He had plenty of it.

Other matters of vast moment claimed his attention as well as this.

Twice he had called at the hotel, but had failed to find the cashier of the East Meridian Bank.

Late at night he had come again and had spied, pacing up and down before the hotel, no less a person than the redoubtable Jesse in his disguise.

Positively Old King Brady did not know him at first.

He wondered who this large, dark-haired man was who seemed to be keeping guard in front of the hotel.

But as he watched the truth dawned upon him.

"He's here on the same errand as myself," thought the detective. "As sure as I'm a sinner, that's Jesse James."

But what should he do?

Feeling no confidence whatever in Mr. Hart, Old King Brady saw the necessity for extreme caution.

Perhaps Tony had told the truth in his letter. Perhaps he and the cashier were "on a drunk together," spending the stolen funds, throwing the money right and left.

"I'll let Jesse see him first and I'll play the shadow," thought the detective.

And he found means to put his purpose to execution.

Unsuspected by Jesse he had been a witness to the encounter between the cousins in the corridor, and had not only seen all that passed in

No. 10, but had also heard every word that had been said.

How?

It was simple.

No. 10 was a corner room—and the shed ran under its window as well as under that at the end of the hall.

Must we expose all of the great detective's methods.

It seems scarcely necessary.

Suffice to say that Old King Brady was on the shed roof from the first moment Jesse and the cashier entered the room.

Thus he not only was able to see all through the window, but by raising the sash slightly to hear all as well.

At the very moment when Tony's call came outside the door, Old King Brady had been on the point of springing through the window and securing the outlaw.

Then came the disclosures of the bag and the boodle, as Jesse might put it, and it seemed wiser to wait.

Had Old King Brady waited just a shade too long?

Not so far as as the bag was concerned.

He had that now and meant to keep it.

He meant, if possible, to have Jesse, too.

"Crack! Crack!"

"Bang! Bang!"

Bullets did the talking as the old detective followed Jesse through the window, out on to the shed, down to the ground and across the back-yard behind the hotel.

There was no use in wasting words at such a time as this.

Still no damage was done, and this was due to the darkness—it must have been.

Under ordinary circumstances both these men were excellent shots.

Jesse gained the fence which separated the yard from the alley and leaped upon it, sending a parting shot after Old King Brady as he dropped down upon the other side.

Was it wise to follow him further?

Scarcely, seeing that he had secured the money, yet the detective hated to give it up.

To climb the fence and expose himself in a position where, encumbered by the bag, he would be at every disadvantage, seemed foolhardy, to say the least.

By this time every window in the hotel—and the neighborhood for that matter—had been thrown up.

Heads in night caps, Scotch caps, scull caps and no caps at all were thrust out on every side.

Some were yelling murder, others were shouting out:

"What is it?"

"What's the row?"

"Police! Police!"

One slack-baked youth from a window on the opposite side of the alley called:

"Sock it to him, Dockerty!" whatever that might mean.

Meanwhile Old King Brady had made for the alley gate.

It was secured only by a bolt and the detective opened it cautiously and peered out.

No one could be seen, neither could the sound of Jesse's retreating footsteps be heard, which was suggestive.

Could it be possible that he was lurking nearby?

Holding the bag in one hand and grasping his revolver firmly in the other, the detective stepped out into the alley.

"Look out, Mister! Look out! He's layin' for you behind the ash bar!" yelled the slack-baked youth from the window above.

Who?

Not Jesse James?

The warning came just a second too late.

Old King Brady had his back half turned toward an ash barrel which stood against the rear fence of the hotel yard, and now a man suddenly rose up from behind the barrel, seized the black bag, wrenched it from his hand, and darted off down the alley firing as he went.

"Crack! Crack!" the shots rang out.

"Bang! Bang!" came the echo of the detective's revolver.

But the shadows were too deep to admit of damage. The shots, like those which had preceded them, flew wide of the mark.

"I might have known," muttered the detective.

The man who had captured the bag was Frank.

Yes, it was Frank James, and no one else.

While Jesse was watching Mr. Hart, Old King Brady was watching Jesse, and Frank had been watching Old King Brady from the ground.

This was the outcome of a triangular game of bluff.

Frank had followed the detective as far as the front door of the hotel—had seen him go into the yard and climb upon the shed.

Instead of following further, he had gone around into the alley and continued his observations from the back fence, having previously ascertained the lay of the land.

Now that he had secured the prize, or thought he had, for Frank did not feel sure of what the bag contained—the outlaw went rushing through the alley, following the direction taken by his brother, and came up with Jesse on Forty-first street beyond.

"Frank! Great snakes! It never can be you!" exclaimed Jesse, amazed beyond all expression.

"What's the reason it can't?" growled Frank. "Do I look like a bloomin' ghost? Get a move onto you, Jess! Quick! Quick! That duffer is comin' licketty split!"

"Hev you got ther bag? Hev you actooly got ther bag?" breathed Jesse, as they dashed on.

"Bet your sweet life!"

"Is the boodle into it?"

"Yes."

"I suspicioned as much."

"But, Frank——"

"No chln music, old man."

"Thar he comes. What be we goin' to do?"

"This," whispered Jesse; "follow me, Frank. It's life or death with us now."

They had reached Third avenue by this time, and Frank thought as Jesse sprang into the middle of the street that he was waiting for a horse car, and inwardly wondered that he could be such a fool.

But Jesse had no such intention.

Behind the horse car a milkman's wagon was joggling along on its way to the Jersey ferry after its morning supply of the watery fluid.

Jesse had the wagon in his eye, and was bent upon another game.

"I've gotter hev a hoss," he muttered. "I can't do nothin' without one. Blame this dogoned city. Ef I was only in Missouri now!"

Yes, like the immortal Richard, Jesse would have sacrificed his all for a horse just then, and that which the outlaw set his heart upon he usually got, if it was to be had by hook or by crook.

With one bold leap he sprang into the milk wagon and pressed a cocked revolver at the driver's head.

"Turn out!" he hissed. "Lick that hoss into his best or you're a dead man!"

In a twinkling, Frank was at his side.

"Good lord, mister, don't kill me! Don't kill me!" gasped the milkman. "I'm only a poor fellow—I've got a wife and nine children to hum!"

"Obey!" whispered Jesse, sternly.

It was that or death.

The milkman seemed to comprehend the situation.

Turning out of the track, he shot ahead of the car, and in a trice the wagon was rattling down the avenue at the top of the poor horse's speed.

"That's the talk!" said Jesse. "He'll not ketch us now. Look hyar, my friend."

"Wha—what do you want, gents?" gasped the milkman. "I hope you'll go easy on me. I've got a wife and nine——"

"Yes—yes; we understand all that," broke in Jesse. "Say, neighbor, ef you'll only keep this hoss a-movin', say nothin' an' saw wood, it'll be all right with you. I kinder gness you ain't sich a dummy but what you kin see we're bein' chased."

"I—I understand, gents. I'll do my best."

"Dogon it! how them cans do rattle!" growled Frank. "They make noise enough to wake the dead."

"Can't be helped, unless I pitch 'em into the street," muttered the milkman.

"Which can't be did, an' so we've gotter put up with it," said Jesse. "Say, Frank, in the name of all that's wonderful, how came you to be on hand?"

"Ain't I allus on hand when I'm needed, Jess?"

"Wal, now you jest air, ez a rule, but——"

"But you left me sicker bed. Thet's all right. I got tired of thet, Jess."

"Yon're a dogoned fool, Frank, ef I do say it. All ther same this hyer would hev been a sick bizness of you hadn't a-come jest ez yer did."

"Wal, then, what yer growlin' at?"

"I ain't a-growlin'. I'm only worrit on your account, brother."

"Don't you worry about me. I'm all over the hypantod by this time—muster been something I eat. Haven't had a decent cooked meal since I left Missouri, an' that's a fact."

"Thet's so. They don't know nothin' about cookin' in New York; no hoe cake, no bacon wuth ther name. No wonder a feller's stomach gets riled. Say, Judge, is that thar hoss doin' his best? Seems ez though I could hear some un a-follin' on us. Dou't you hear it, Frank?"

"I'll be dod blasted if I don't!"

The brothers listened attentively.

Sure enough, behind them the sharp rattle of another wagon could be distinctly heard coming over the stones at a rate of speed which, for all they knew, might surpass their own.

"Yer right. It's ther detective," said Jesse calmly. "He's bound to give us a rub."

He seized the whip and lashed the horse wickedly.

From the sidewalk cries were heard now and then calling upon them to stop, and once a policeman rushed out and tried to stop them by seizing the horse's head, but the flash of Jesse's revolver, combined with several smart cuts with the whip, sent him flying.

And the two wagons rattled on.

"Say, Jess, it's dogoned strange!" whispered Frank.

"What?"

"About Brady."

"Ain't it?"

"I made sure he'd croaked."

"So did I. We was off our kalkerlations again, it seems. He was only shammin' after all."

"Whar'd yer fust see him?"

"At ther winder."

"I seen him in the street when he was a creeple after you. I orter a plugged him then, but I didn't hev no show."

"He's after us now, Frank."

"Jest as sure as yer born, Jess."

"We want to get back ter Phil's joint as soon as ever we can. I s'pose we're goin' the right way, but I'll be blessed if I kin tell."

"We're gwine ther right way, sure pop," growled Frank; "but we don't want to go back to Phil's—not by several jugfuls."

"Why not?"

"'Coz ther sheriff's onto us—I mean ther police."

"Yer don't say!"

"But I do, though. You'd no more'n gone when Phil routed me out an' told me thar was two on 'em in the bar-room gwine ter search the place. I had no mor'n time to crawl out ther winder onto a shed than they came ker-slashing inter ther room. It was dogoned lucky that they didn't ketch sight of me when I jumped down inter the back-yard and got over ther fence inter the next."

"Wal, I should say so! What did yer do then, Frank?"

"Slipped out through the next house," replied Frank. "Thet thar is a saloon, too, you know. Soon ez ever I got into it I made fer the street."

"And then you steered straight fer the hotel?"

"That's about the size of it, Jess."

"An' now it's all cleared up, whar we gwine?" whispered Jesse.

"You got the boodle in that bag?"

"Sure!"

"Got it from Joe?"

"From Dutch Tom's son Tony."

"What?"

"Can't you hear?"

"Yes, but you surprised me. I was watchin' the hotel close. I didn't see him come in."

"But he was thar, though," replied Jess, and in whispered accents he communicated the whole story.

By the time it was finished they had swung round into the Bowery.

Frank poked his head out of the wagon and gazed anxiously behind them, for the rattle of the other wagon was drawing unpleasantly near.

"He's ketchin' up with us, Jess," he exclaimed, pulling back.

"I was afraid of it. Say, Kun'l, can't you get a leetle more speed out'n that thar horse?"

"I can try, gents, if you want to see him drop down dead," replied the milkman, who had in a measure got over his fright. "I'm expectin' to see him do it every minute as it is."

"Elast the beast; he's no good!"

"Nct for your kinder business, praps. He's good enough for mine."

"What be we gwinter do?"

"That depends upon what you want to do," replied the man.

"We want to get to the nearest railroad what'll take us west," spoke up Frank, "an' we don't want nothing else."

"Thet's the talk," chimed in Jesse.

"I tell you what it is, gents," said the milkman; "what you want is to get ter Jersey, they can't touch you there."

"Thet's so," cried Jesse. "It's another State."

"Jersey! Just where I'm going."

"Then go on. Quick, quick!"

"Blame me ef I think we kin fetch it," muttered Frank, who had been taking another look behind.

"How near is he?" asked Jesse.

"Only a couple of blocks."

"And gainin' on us every second," added the milkman, looking back. "His horse is worth two of mine."

"It's jest as true as you live, Jess."

"I'll be dogoned ef I don't think so, Frank."

"We'd better light out."

"Guess, we've gotter. Say, cap'n, what had we better do?"

"Detective after you?" asked the milkman

"Of course! Can't yer see through a brick with a hole into it—say?"

"Wall, gents, there's two of yer—he's only one."

"Yes, but it's Old King Brady."

"Thunder! Well, that make a difference. Looker here. I'll swing round into Prince street soon as ever we turn the corner. You jump out and switch yourselves in out of sight somewhere. That's my advice, and you can follow it or not, jest az you please."

"It's the only thing ter do, I guess," said Jesse. "Gosh! Frank, what's ther matter with us, anyhow? Is it our fault, or does that blamed Irishman bear a charmed life?"

"Looks most mightily as ef he did," answered Frank. "You don't disremember our experience in Missouri, I s'pose."

"Tain't likely. Hello! Here we go!"

"Now's your time, gents!" said the milkman, as the wagon swung round out of the Bowery into Prince street.

"Look out, look out! You'll run over the girl!" shouted an excited voice from the street in front of them.

There was a shriek—a cry of horror, and the brothers saw the horse strike against a slight, girlish figure which instantly sank down upon the slushy stones.

The milkman instantly reined in the horse.

"Jump, Jess! Jump!" cried Frank.

They leaped from the wagon together.

Too late, though to accomplish their purpose.

As if suspecting their design the speed of the pursuing wagon had been increased, and it was now close upon them.

Out leaped Old King Brady, his face wearing a look of determination as he sprang in pursuit of the outlaw brothers, such as even the most hardened criminals have seldom seen.

"Gosh, hang it all! We hain't no better off than we was before!" gasped Frank as they dashed away.

CHAPTER XI.

A STERN CHASE IS A LONG CHASE, AND OLD KING BRADY FINDS IT OUT.

Yes, it was Old King Brady.

The James Boys, ever shrewd, had made no mistake about that.

The encounter with Frank in the alley had been so sudden and so wholly unexpected that it had taken Old King Brady entirely off his guard.

As he started to follow Frank his foot had slipped upon the ice-covered surface of the alley sending him sprawling.

But it may have saved his life, for just then a bullet went whistling harmlessly past him.

Be this however, as it may it gave Frank the start.

Through the alley into Forty-first street, along Forty-first street to Third avenue the detective dashed as soon as he could gather himself up.

Already the "makings of a crowd," as Paddy puts it, had begun to gather—people burning with curiosity to know what it was all about.

"They've skipped in that milk wagon, mister!" cried a desperate-looking fellow. "Blame me if it ain't Old King Brady!" he added in a whisper, at the same time edging away.

"I must play their own tactics if I want to succeed," thought the detective.

To think was to act, and the next action was to capture another milk wagon which came jogging down the avenue.

A hasty explanation was all that was needed to induce the driver to put the horse to his best.

The result we know, and nothing need be said about it.

"Just in time to be too late, I'm afraid," thought old King Brady, as he leaped from the wagon and found himself pursuing the James Boys again.

"Stop! Arrest that driver! He's run over a girl!" some one was shouting.

Late as was the hour people were running to the scene of the accident. It is never too late to raise a crowd in the neighborhood where the detective found himself now.

But Old King Brady could not do two things at once. He felt that the James Boys alone concerned him now.

"There were Frank and Jesse running along Prince street toward Mott—they had already crossed Elizabeth—and there was several men following—some one recognized Old King Brady and called his name.

"There they go!"

"Them's the fellows, Mr. Brady!"

"Hold on to the driver, somebody? The girl is killed!"

These and similar cries were heard.

All at once Old King Brady saw Frank slip on the ice and fall, the black grip sack flying out into the middle of the street as he went.

"Frank!" exclaimed Jesse, in dismay.

"Fly, Jess! Fly!" called Frank. "Double on 'em round the corner. Don't stop for me."

But Jesse would hear to no such thing.

"Are you hurt?" he whispered, seizing his brother by the arm and jerking him to his feet.

"No—no! The bag! The bag!"

"Can't be did," replied Jesse, coolly. "We've got to think of ourselves first of all."

And they flew around the corner of Mott street like the wind.

And Old King Brady was only a short distance behind him. The detective's long legs had carried him, as usual, to the front.

Only one person was ahead of him, a boy, who, without an instant's hesitation, sprang into the street and grabbed the bag.

Old King Brady promptly grabbed the boy.

"Dick Wells!" he exclaimed, astonished.

"Mr. Brady!"

"You've got it, boy! you've got it!"

"What?"

"The money!"

"I was sure of it. Ob, Mr. Brady, it's Kate's."

"I guessed as much. Hold on to the bag, Dick, I'm after these rascals! Keep near here till I return."

It was a big risk to run to trust a boy like Dick, but Old King Brady was an excellent judge of human nature. He had sized Dick up and felt confidence in him.

Quick to decide, he had resolved to take the risk.

In a second he had dashed round the corner of Mott street, and was lost to view, leaving the bag with Dick.

And the crowd followed. That is most of them.

Dick, clutching the bag, returned to the scene of the accident and found quite a little knot gathered around Kate, who was leaning up against a store window, looking very white and faint.

"Oh, Dick! I'm so glad you've come!" she murmured. "I—I—somehow I don't feel right."

"Better take her home if she belongs to you, young feller."

"Kate, are you hurt?" whispered Dick.

"I—I don't think so, Dick, the horse barely touched me. Tell me all about it. Tell me, Dick—these men—that bag."

"It's the bag, Kate. The men were the James Boys. It was Old King Brady, too."

"Thank God! Dick, you must leave me."

"No, no!"

"You must. Follow Old King Brady. Get rid of that dreadful money as soon as ever you can. I—I'm all right. I'll take the cars and go straight home."

"Are you sure you are able to do it, Kate?"

"Yes, yes, don't delay a moment. Give the bag up to Old King Brady, to a policeman—to some one."

"Good-bye, then!" whispered Dick. "I'll do just as you say."

In fact the entire conversation had been carried on in whispers. If those who stood near heard a word here and there, they had no comprehension of what was meant.

Dick hurried away and made for the corner.

Kate, thanking those about her, now moved toward the Bowery.

Before this the milkman, watching his chance, had driven away.

Thus Dick, when he turned into Mott street, found himself alone with the much sought for money in his hands.

What a chance to make tracks and appropriate it himself!

For a single instant the idea occurred to Dick Wells, but he banished the thought as soon as it was conceived.

He thought of Kate.

How good she was and how true.

Never for a moment would such an idea have entered her head.

"I'll give it to Old King Brady if I can see him," thought Dick, resolutely, looking up the street. "If I can't, I'll take it round to Police Headquarters for—"

"I'll trouble you for that bag, Dick Wells!" said a sneering voice right alongside of him.

A tall, solemn-faced man had risen suddenly from behind an empty track, which stood drawn up against the curb.

It was Frank James.

"Thought I'd stay behind and keep an eye on the boodle," he said, coolly. "Much obliged to you for takin' care of it, young feller. I—"

"Whack—whack!"

A fierce imprecation from the outlaw echoed through the now silent street.

The fact was Dick had suddenly grown desperate.

As Frank sprang upon him he raised the bag and swinging it wildly brought it down upon the head of his enemy twice in quick succession with all the force that he could command.

The blows sent Frank sprawling even as he shouted.

Dick lost no time but dashed away up Mott street at the top of his speed.

"Stop, or you're a dead duck!" yelled Frank, gaining his feet and following.

But he did not fire.

It was not necessary.

The cold had increased as the night advanced, and the sidewalks had grown tremendously slippery.

Before he had gone ten feet, Dick fell sprawling.

In an instant Frank was upon him and had seized him by the collar, wrenched away the bag, which he still clutched desperately, and jerked the boy to his feet.

"At last!" he hissed. "Now I've got you, Dick Wells. May I be chewed up with gophers, but you shall pay for this! Ha! Here comes that dod blasted detective again!"

A man was running toward them from further up the block.

It might have been Old King Brady, or any one else, for all Dick could tell.

Frank, at least, seemed to take it for granted that it was the detective.

Till clutching Dick by the collar with his right

hand and clinging to the bag with his left, he made a dive down some steps leading to a saloon, where a light still burned.

The sign above the door read,

"Mrs. Mix, Lager Beer."

To Frank, who had grown desperate, and lost his head, it must have seemed the only avenue of escape, for he went dashing down the steps, dragging Dick after him.

Seizing the knob, he wrenched open the door and sprang in.

"Thank the Lord, you've come at last!" Dick heard a deep voice exclaim as a tall, black-bearded man confronted them.

The man was Jesse James.

Dick's heart sank within him.

He gave himself up for lost as a hideous old hag suddenly sprang to the door and shot the bolt.

"Turn out the gas, mother," panted Frank.

"The detective is right on top of us."

"I'll do that," breathed Jesse.

In an instant Dick found himself enveloped in darkness most profound.

CHAPTER XII.

BLUFF.

POSITIVELY Old King Brady was in wretched luck that night.

Mott street was badly lighted, there were several men running; Jesse James moreover had so altered his appearance that somehow—just how the detective could never tell—he managed to give his pursuer the slip.

He was there, and then he wasn't there.

Until he reached the corner of Houston street, Old King Brady felt sure of Jesse, although somehow he could not seem to see Frank.

Shrewd Frank!

"I'm not gwinter leave the money nohow, Jess," he whispered. "Go on, old fellow, I know you'll be good for him."

And Frank shot behind the truck.

But where was Jesse?

When Old King Brady overtook the man upon whom he had kept his eyes fixed, lo and behold it was not Jesse James.

Old King Brady uttered an exclamation of disgust.

"What's the row—where's the fire?" gasped the man. "Heered everybody hollerin' and runnin', and I come out to see what was up?"

Old King Brady questioned him for an instant, but could learn nothing.

"The scoundrels! They have doubled on me somehow," he muttered. "What the mischief ails me to-night—am I asleep?"

He hurried back along Mott street in deep chagrin.

Then it was that from a distance he caught sight of Frank James dragging Dick Wells.

He saw the bag in Frank's hand, too, and the sight made him furious.

He quickened his steps, when suddenly they vanished from sight.

"The deuce! He's gone in somewhere!" thought the detective. "Strange! They can't have friends in this neighborhood, where they have happened only by accident. It's a bad business, though. The fat is all in the fire, I'm afraid. I'm dead sure that it was Frank. It was that boy, too, and the bag. Fool that I was to let it go out of my hands!"

In fact Old King Brady was beginning to feel pretty thoroughly disgusted with himself.

Never, in all his career, it seemed to him just then, had he botched up a case so badly as this.

By promptness and perseverance he had actually got possession twice of the stolen funds of the East Meridian bank, only to have them snatched away from him again.

Would fortune favor him for the third time?

It was doubtful to say the least.

And now as he hurried back along Mott street to the corner of Prince, Old King Brady was at a loss to discover into which of the tenements Frank James had disappeared.

All had stores in the basement, but all were equally dark and deserted-looking. The detective reached the corner and found himself more completely at sea than ever.

Matters began to wear a most discouraging look.

Now he retraced his steps, and more slowly.

He felt certain that Frank had vanished into one of the basement saloons of which there were several on that part of the block.

Very good for a theory as far as it went, but which?

Suddenly Old King Brady gave a grunt of surprise.

He had paused before one particular saloon, and was staring up at the sign above the door.

The sign read "Mrs. Mix, Lager Beer."

"It can't be!" muttered the detective. "The idea is too ridiculous. I must be crazy!"

As he looked at the sign strange remembrances came upon him.

He seemed to see a lonely hut standing in the midst of a Missouri oak grove, to see a hideous old hag standing at the door holding a flaring candle with a good-looking young girl at her side.

Old King Brady was thinking of the days when he hunted the James Boys down in Missouri, actually putting the handcuffs on Jesse—and let it be understood that he was the only detective who ever succeeded in doing this—taking him as far as St. Louis, where he would most certainly have been turned over to the tender mercies of the authorities but for the timely interference of Frank.

Thinking of all this and other things, it was quite natural that the detective should be startled by the sudden appearance before his eyes of the well-remembered name—Mix.

It was too suggestive.

If this Mrs. Mix was anything by either blood or marriage to old Mother Mix, in whose capacious chimney Old King Brady had once passed an uncomfortable night, then in all probability the James Boys knew her well.

"Mix, Mix," muttered the detective. "Ha, ha! Well, it has been nothing but Mix from the very beginning of this case, and more things are pretty thoroughly mixed up."

"Come, my good woman," he added, "your name is an unfortunate one. Whether you are innocent or guilty you have got to be routed out."

He cautiously descended the steps and tried to peer behind the drawn shade.

There was no light in the place.

But as Old King Brady stood there listening, he thought he could just catch the sound of some one moving gently about behind the door.

He stood motionless, one eye fixed upon the window, the other hastily taking in the characteristics of the house.

It was the left eye that was doing this, and it saw that the house was a regular old rookery—a frame affair built in the year dot, no doubt, standing jammed in between two lofty tenements which towered above its roof like two perpendicular mountain peaks.

So much for the discoveries of the left eye; meanwhile, the right eye had made a discovery, too.

It was the fact that still a third eye was attending to business, taking in the scene on the outside from around the angle of the shade within.

"Humph!" muttered the detective. "I thought as much. It's as much as one's life is worth to

go into that place alone, but I've got to take the chances. If I stop to call help, it's good-bye to the bank funds forever. Here goes."

He raised his doubled fist and dealt a succession of thunderous knocks upon the door.

Instantly the eye was withdrawn from behind the shade.

All was as still as death inside.

"'Twon't work," muttered Old King Brady. "I'll have them out though, or I'll break in myself—one of the two."

"Bang, bang, bang!" sounded the knocking upon the door again.

This meant business.

It also meant a crowd if it was kept up—something that was evidently understood by the owner of the eye inside.

For now a cracked voice was heard dawdling:

"Wal, now, yeon needn't bust the door in! Who in time is it? What du yeon want?"

"Want to come in. Open quick."

"Won't nuther," replied the voice. "This hyar placed is closed long ago, an' I'm a-bed and asleep. G'way, mister. You've dranked enough already. Anyhow you can't get nuthin' in hyar."

"Great Scott!" muttered the detective. "I ought to know that voice, and I do. It's old Mother Mix herself as sure as fate."

"If you don't open the door instantly, Mrs. Mix, I'll burst it in!" he called. "Understand me—I am an officer—I mean precisely what I say."

"Good Lord! how short ye bel Ye don't give anybody half a chance. What do yeon wau't, anyheow? This hyar shop's ben shet sence midnight 'cordin' to law."

Old King Brady made no answer.

It was perfectly evident that the woman was seeking only to gain time.

Throwing his whole weight against the door, he almost forced it from its hinges, the action bringing with it a loud remonstrance from within.

"Oh, for the land sakes hold on! Give a body time to turn the key, won't yer?"

"Be quick about it, then."

"I'm bein' ez quick ez I can."

The door flew open.

A tall, angular old female, as thin as a lath, with gray hair, withered cheeks and little pig eyes stood within, the outlines of her form dimly discernible by the flickering light from the street.

"Lawful sakes! Guess I know yeon, mister," she chuckled. "It's Mr. Brady, hain't it? Wal—wal! Who'd ever a-thunk it? Arter all this hyar world is mighty small."

"Mother Mix," cried Old King Brady, "I've no time to waste in talking. The James Boys are in your place, and I want you to tell me just where. Do you understand?"

"The James Boys!" drawled the old woman, "the James Boys! Man, you must be crazy. What in the name of sense would the James Boys be doin' in New York?"

"Tut, tut, woman! Who would have expected to see you in New York? You understand me well enough. Light the gas."

"I won't!" shrieked Mother Mix. "Heow dare you break into a respectable place at this hour of the night! Heow du I know what yeon are after with your trumped up humguffin story 'bout ther James Boys? Wisht I could only see a cop an' I'd hev you snaked out of hyar pretty dogoned quick."

"Get out of my way!" snapped Old King Brady.

He struck a match and lit the gas.

It showed him a dirty attempt at a beer saloon. A bar, an ice box, a few tables and chairs, and the usual display of bottles and kegs on one side.

No trace of the presence of the James Boys, however, was to be seen.

"Didn't Frank James come in here a moment ago dragging a boy after him?" demanded Old King Brady, sternly.

"No."

"Mrs. Mix, you are lying."

"Gosh hang yer! Yer cussedly perlite."

"It's no time for politeness, woman. Show me which way Frank James went."

"Tell yer he ain't lyar."

"Again I tell you that you lie. Mrs. Mix, close and lock that door."

"What! Lock myself in with a man arter midnight! I must do nuffin' of the sort. I'll hev yer ter know thet I'm a respectable widy woman. I——"

"Shut up!" roared the detective. "Do as I order you or I'll have the handcuffs on you in just two seconds. Why ain't you doing time in the Missouri penitentiary for shoving the queer? I wouldn't be a bit surprised if you were wanted out there, and you'll get there if you don't have a care."

Mother Mix turned as pale as death.

"Wall, I'd like ter accommydate yer, mister," she whined, "but I can't make ther James Boys appear in my house jest ter suit yer. Ef ye think Jess an' Frank is in New York, most like they'll give me a call 'fore they leave. Call round tomorrow, an'——"

"Shut that door!"

"Oh, I'm a-goin' ter. S'pose I've gotter humor yer."

The door was reluctantly shut and locked.

"Light the gas in the back room!" commanded the detective.

"An' hev my liscence took away for keepin' open after hours?"

"Do as I tell you, Mrs. Mix. No nonsense!"

"Oh, I'm agoin' ter. I'm only a poor old body anyheow, and I move slow."

She fumbled about for a match, tottered into the back room and lit the gas.

Her hesitation spoke louder than her protests. Beside this, there was a curious twinkle in her eye which made Old King Brady feel sure that he was not making a mistake.

Still, there was no one in the back room any more than there had been in the saloon.

"Open the door and let me come out into the rear," commanded Old King Brady.

Reluctantly the door was unbolted and the detective peered out.

Practically there was no back yard—just a narrow space with the high dead wall of an Elizabeth street factory rising in front of him and the walls of two tenement houses at the side.

Clearly there was no chance to escape here.

Old King Brady closed the door and returned to the saloon.

"In which of the rooms up-stairs is Frank James, Mrs. Mix?" he asked quietly.

"Good Lord, man, how you dr. stick tew it. I tell you I hain't seen Frank James sence ther day he got ther best of you in ther St. Louis Union depot, an' that's a coon's age ago, ther dear knows."

"Mrs. Mix, in which of the rooms up-stairs is Frank James?" repeated the detective as coolly as before.

"Sufferin' Moses, ef you ain't enough to drive one crazy. I knowed yer was a persistent cuss, mister, but I never knowed you dranked."

"Mrs. Mix, in which of the rooms up-stairs is Frank James?" repeated Old King Brady for the third time. "Understand me distinctly, woman, I shan't ask again."

"You won't, hey? What will yer du?"

"Put the handcuffs on you, take you out into the street and turn you over to the first policeman."

"You will?"

"I certainly will."

"Wal, then I s'pose I've got ter do it. I'm betwixt tew fires, an' I am pretty certain tew get burned with both, way things look."

"My question—answer my question!" cried Old King Brady.

"Won't yer give a body time ter think?"

"Not another instant."

"Dogon it all, but yeou're a hard one," groaned Mother Mix. "Ef yer must know, Frank's in ther front room ou the top floor."

"I knew it! And Jesse?"

"S'pose I may ez well be hung for an old sheep ez a lamb," replied the woman. "Ef you must know, Jess, he's thar tew."

CHAPTER XIII.

WHERE'S THE BAG?

LET us now return to Dick Wells, whose position when we last left him was anything but an enviable one, to say the least.

At the sight of Jesse James Dick's heart dropped to the very soles of his boots.

Still it was no time to talk.

Frank's admonition to say nothing and saw wood had never applied with as much force as now.

"Stand thar an' mind the bag!" breathed Frank, pushing the boy over against the corner of the bar and dropping the bag at his feet with an air of fatigue.

This was just as the gas was turned off, as has been already told.

"Whar'd yer leave Brady?" whispered Jesse.

"Whar'd you leave him, that's ther question?" panted Frank. "Last I see of him he wuz comin' deown the street full split."

"Oh, I gave him the slip!" answered Jesse. "I seen the sign hyar an' I made sartin it was old Mother Mix."

"Same with me."

"It's a piece of blessed good luck. Mother, you shall be rewarded for this if you'll only help us out."

"Wal, neow, boys, you've done gone an' taken all the wind out'n my sails!" muttered Mother Mix. "Who in time would ever hev thought of seein' yeon in these hyar parts?"

"You kin jest bet your sweet existence you won't see us hyar again in a hurry ef we can ever get away," retorted Jesse. "But heow came yeon hyar, Misses Mix? Heard you'd gone to the penitentiary up to Jefferson City for shovin' ther queer."

"Wal, yer hearn what was a lie, then," snapped the woman. "The Mixes don't go to the penitentiary no more'n ther Janeses, I want you to understand. Why, Lord love yer, Jess, my husband, what was killed in ther war a fittin' agin ther blamed Yanks, was first consin to Senator Dockney. All I hed ter du was ter get Bill Dockney ter speak a word for me an' they let up a 'parsecution' on me, but of course I had ter leave ther State."

"But what brung yer hyar, old woman? I couldn't believe it when I first seen yer name on to the sign."

"No more could I b'lieve 'twas yeoun when I first see yer ugly mug a peepin' in the door, Jess James. This hyar place wuz kept by my grandson-in-law; he's ded, an' I came in an' bought it eout."

"Guess yer didn't pay ther bill, then," growled Frank. "Who's yer grandson-in-law, anyhow?"

"He wuz a Dutchman named Schneider."

"Yer don't mean ter tell me that Carrie married a Dutchman, du yer?" cried Jesse. "I'm surprised at yer, Mrs. Mix; why you 'uns hev the very best blood in ther State of Missonri a coursin' threw yer veins."

"No, no, no! 'Twan't Carrie—'twas Jernshy Ann, Lucindy's child. I couldn't help it nuther. 'Twas her father's dewin. He warn't nothin' but a low-lived Yank from York State anyheow; but looker hyar, boys, what yer been up tew? What yer want?"

"The fust ain't none of yer bizness, mother," said Jesse. "Ez fer ther second, we want yer to hide us somewheres. That blarsted detective, Old King Brady, is onto our track."

"An' 'll be thumpin' at ther door in jest erbout tew shakes of a mare's tail," added Frank. "Lord, Jess, but my inard do feel mortal bad."

"Knowd how 'twould be," snapped Jesse. "Yer orter stayed in bed."

"Oh, you'd a-stayed in bed with ther sheriff—I mean ter say the cops—comin' threw the door, wouldn't yer, now! Be spry, now, Mrs. Mix. Who's in this house besides yerself?"

"Not a blamed soul, to-night," replied Mother Mix.

"What! yer don't keep ther hull establishment, do yer?"

"Course I dew. I own it. My rooms up-stairs hain't rented jest neow, though, and my bartender won't sleep here. Thet's the way on it, Frank."

"Wal, I've gotter lay down, tew, somewhere," groaned Frank, "thet's flat. I'm a very sick man."

"Sh, sh!" breathed Jesse. "Thought I heered some one a-comin' down ther steps."

They listened, but without all was still.

"False alarm!" said Frank. "We'll go up-stairs now. Show us a glim, mother. A bit of candle's more'n enough. Ten to one the detective won't come, but if he should—"

"Wall, then you'll hear him," interrupted Mother Mix, "and you've got the beautifullest chance to light out thet ever you see."

"Explain yourself, old woman!" whispered Jesse.

"Scuttle'll take you eout onter ther roof," answered Mother Mix, "an' from thar there's a winder leadin' inter ther hull of ther next house. Door is always open there, and ye've nothing ter dew but ter skip inter ther street."

"The very thing. You'll give us warning, mother?"

"Bet yer life I will, Frank! Hyar's ther candle neow, boys. Hello! I forgot this feller. What yer gwinter dew with him?"

During all this colloquy Dick Wells had not made an audible sound.

There he stood beside the bar, looking as innocent as a baby. But where was the bag?

Jesse could not see it—neither could Frank.

The latter uttered a cry of rage.

"Dogon yer little soul! What shenanagen is this yer tryin' ter come over us?" he shouted. "Whar's thet bag, boy? Gosh hang yer, whar's thet bag?"

"What bag?" asked Dick, keeping up his courage with an effort, but succeeding just the same.

"Now, don't you try any funny business with us!" hissed Jesse. "Ef you've got ther bag jest you give it up or I'll shoot yer down like I would a Missouri sheriff. Speak up!"

"I don't know what you're talking about," protested Dick. "Frank hollered out 'there's the bag,' but I didn't see it."

"But you felt it?"

"No, I didn't feel it. I don't know the first blessed thing about it. I wish to goodness I'd never seen the bag at all."

Meanwhile, Frank was looking everywhere. Behind the bar and under the table, all around where Dick had stood, but with no success.

Of course he was furlous.

"Ef you don't own up what yer done with it,

I'll blow ther hull top of yer head off!" he cried, brandishing his revolver.

"I tell you I don't know anything about it," protested Dick.

"Mebbe the old woman has collared it!" suggested Jesse. "Ef you hev, mother, you'd better show up pretty dogoned quick! I kinder guess you know I ain't a man to be riled."

"Never seen the bag from the fust minute Frank comer pikin' in," protested Mrs. Mix, angrily. "You oughter know me better than to accuse me of being a thief, Jesse James, an' our families connected by marriage, tew."

"Oh, you go to pot!" cried Frank. "The bag! The bag! One or t'other of you've gotter give it up pretty blamed sudden. Speak, young feller. It's one, tew three and a go neow! Whar's that thar bag?"

But Dick never answered a word.

He thought of Kate—brave Kate—who all night long had worked untiringly that the stolen money might be returned to those to whom it rightfully belonged.

The thought gave him courage.

Somehow he didn't believe Frank would shoot him, and he was right.

"Put up ther gun!" growled Jesse. "Do you want to give ther detectives the steer?"

"I want ther bag," foamed Frank.

"It's yer own fault. Why in time didn't you hold on to it? Let's look about a bit. Ef the boy moves a step blow the whole top of his head off whether or no."

Again they looked everywhere, but they did not find the bag.

Mother Mix, as much mystified as they were themselves, assisted in the vain search.

"It's dogoned strange!" snarled Jesse. "Yer sure you brung it in, Frank?"

"Am I sure? Didn't you see me bring it in? Do you think I'd try any double game with you, Jess? I swar to gracious I'd rather lose the hull boodle than hev my own brother talk to me like that."

"Hush—hush!" whispered Mother Mix, suddenly extinguishing the bit of candle. "Thar's some one coming down the steps."

Jesse glided toward the curtain, and peered out.

"It's Old King Brady as sure as shootin'," he breathed, just as the knock came on the door.

"We must get up-stairs," whispered Frank, "but I don't leave this place nohow till I find that bag."

"What shall we do with the boy?" whispered Jesse. "We know he hain't to be depended upon."

"Depended upon! I should say not. Besides, he knows whar the bag is, an' ef he don't tell I'm goin' ter cut his throat."

"Tie him and shove down suller!" suggested Mother Mix.

"A good idea. Gotter rope?"

"Yes. Here's one."

She handed the rope to Jesse. Where she got it the brothers could not tell in the dark.

Meanwhile Old King Brady was banging furiously at the door.

"Whar's the way down suller?" questioned Jesse, in a scarcely audible tone.

"Go down with him on ther beer trap—here," whispered Mother Mix.

She pulled Jesse along the floor and made him understand by the sense of feeling the nature of the little elevator with which most beer saloons in New York are provided for the purpose of lifting their kegs from the cellar to the ground floor.

"All you've gotter dew when you get down is ter dump him," she said; "then pull the rope and up yer come."

"Anyway out of the suller but this?"

"No; ther door is locked and bolted. Be quick! That Brady man will bust the door in ef nuthin' hain't done."

Jesse was surprisingly quick to comprehend the working of the little elevator.

Beside binding poor Dick he had also gagged him, and he now dragged him to the trap and like the far-famed Mr. McGinty down they went.

Meanwhile the conversation between Mother Mix and Old King Brady through the door had begun.

In a second or two Jesse was back again.

"All right?" whispered Frank.

"Bet yer life."

"Then we'd better git. Thet door's gotter be opened. Mother Mix, ef you give us away yer may as well send round for an undertaker ter git yer measure, for yer jest ez good ez dead."

They vanished through the side door together.

A moment later and Old King Brady came bursting into the saloon.

CHAPTER XIV.

DICK WELLS.

It oftentimes require circumstances to draw us out.

Many a man has gone through life with the secret conviction that he is a stupid fellow in comparison with his neighbors, that he lacks discernment, or is a coward, simply because circumstances never shaped themselves in such a way that he could show what he could do.

It was so with Dick Wells.

When he first met the James Boys on the lonely drive, Dick was horribly afraid and there is no denying it.

By this time, however, he had become in a measure accustomed to their loud braggart style of conversation, and though he had not the least doubt that they would shoot him if they felt that it would pay them to do so, he did not feel half the fear that he had done at first.

"By gracious, I got the best of them that time," he muttered as he found himself lying helpless upon the damp floor of the cellar. "They'll leave me alone till they find the bag, whatever else they do."

He could hear the tramping of feet above him, and as he lay there he wondered what the outcome of it would all be.

"If I could only let Old King Brady know, I'd be the happiest fellow in all the world," thought Dick. "By gracious, I believe I can do it. Anyhow I'm going to try."

Now, in tying Dick Jesse had worked hastily, and, as a consequence, carelessly.

Dick knew this. He felt absolutely certain that he would be able to work his arms free.

Over the cellar floor he turned and twisted, this way and that. The bonds were loosening; success was certain, but it took time.

When at last it was accomplished, in the floor above all was still.

Dick's first act was to remove the gag, of course.

This was nothing but Jesse's handkerchief, and had choked him half to death.

Next he went to work on the knots which secured his feet, and this took more time.

Meanwhile the stillness above had been maintained.

"Wonder if I've got any matches about me," muttered Dick, scrambling to his feet.

A hasty examination of his pockets revealed three, one of which was put to immediate use.

It showed Dick a big chimney right before him with a fireplace; it showed him also that the walls were plastered, and that there was a regular staircase leading to the floor above.

Evidently this had not been always the cellar. This was so. The house was one of the oldest.

on the block. It had occupied its present position before the grade of the street was raised, and what was now the cellar had originally been the basement floor.

And there was another peculiarity about the house which Old King Brady had noticed if Dick had not.

It had no side door, the whole front being taken in by the saloon.

Dick crept up the stairs and tried the door.

He was disappointed but not surprised to find it locked on the outside.

Should he knock to be let out?

If he did he was just as likely to bring the James Boys down upon him as Old King Brady.

He remained for a moment listening, but could hear no sound.

Again and again he tried to force the door, but his efforts in this direction proved quite useless.

All this time Dick was keeping up a tremendous thinking, and when he gave it up at last he hurried back down the stairs and attempted to pull down the little beer elevator.

This was the first plan he had formed, but it did not work.

The rope which worked the elevator was an old one and very rotten. Jesse had given it a hard tug and now Dick gave it another.

The result was the rope broke and came rattling down about the boy's ears.

"Confound it all! Now I'm dished!" muttered Dick in deep chagrin.

Long before this the first match had gone out and now Dick lit another.

He had still one more scheme for promptly making his escape.

But would it work?

It seemed a wild thought.

Match in hand, Dick hurried toward the fireplace and peered up the flue.

"I can do it!" he exclaimed—"I can do it! I was sure that iron bar meant something. I'll bet a dollar they go all the way up on the roof."

The chimney, as we have said, was an unusually large one.

Dick, when he first looked at it, had spied an iron bar projecting slightly from the bricks and extending across the flue, and it had immediately struck him that as the house was old perhaps this was the beginning of one of those chimney ladders often found in well-built houses of former days, and are intended for the use of sweeps.

Probably the thought came because Dick had once lived in such a house—because he had once climbed just such a ladder, getting soundly thrashed for spoiling his clothes.

Holding the dying match up the flue, Dick could see that there was a regular line of bars one above the other.

Just then the match went out, but this made no difference.

Dick's hand had already clutched the lowest bar.

"If I can only make the roof I'm all right," he muttered.

He remembered what Mother Mix had said about the window of the house adjoining when she told the James Brothers how easy it would be for them to make their escape.

"I can slip through that window and be in the street in no time," he reflected, "ready to help Old King Brady, and —"

And what?

Dick was in the chimney now, and as he failed to finish his sentence, how can we say?

It was a dirty climb, but not a hard one. For a boy like Dick to pull himself up by these bars was the easiest kind of task, and the chimney was big enough for two.

He had overpassed the line of the saloon floor, and was just making for the next when all at

once—crack! went a shot right above his head. It sent Dick's heart into his mouth. In his first terror he almost let go his hold.

Crack! Crack!

Crack! Crack!

They seemed to be firing all about him, but the shots were not flying down the chimney for all that.

"Gosh! they're at it!" breathed Dick, and he climbed on.

Now all was excitement.

Every moment counted. Would he never reach the roof?

Crack! Crack!

Crack! Crack!

Four shots more rang out.

Then came utter silence.

Dick was doing his best, but as he looked up now he began to wonder why he could not see the dim night glow of the city above.

Suddenly his head struck with terrible force against some obstacle.

The shock was fearful.

It was the greatest wonder in the world that Dick did not let go his hold.

But he did not.

He caught himself just in time and courageously clung to the bar.

A moment's reflection showed him what had happened. He knew now why he had not been able to see the sky.

The flue which he had been ascending went no further. It had once served for the cellar in the days when it was a basement, but had been bricked up at the outlet long ago.

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

They were shooting again. Evidently matters were getting hot.

To keep on ascending was quite impossible, to retreat to put himself at the mercy of the James Boys in case they happened to come out ahead in the combat. What, then, was the boy to do?

Already a way had suggested itself.

The chimney was the rear one, and the shots came from the front of the house. Shining directly before Dick as he clung to the bar was a faint glimmer of light.

It came from behind a fire board along with a stove pipe which had been carried through the side of the bricked up flue into another, and presumably an open one; it told Dick that here and here only lay his chance of escape.

There was no one in the room but the old woman. Dick was certain of that, for he could hear her pacing up and down, swearing horribly to herself.

"Dod rot 'em! They'll have my house pulled! Dogon 'em! Why kean't Jess James stick to ole Missouri an' leave honest people what want to brace up an' do an honest bizness alone!"

These are only samples of the very mildest of her talk.

Suddenly the firing began again.

"Stop! Stop! I won't hev it! Quit thar, you Brady man!" Dick heard Mother Mix yell, and then it seemed to him that he could hear the flip-flap of her old slippers as she rushed out into the hall.

"Now's my time!" thought the boy. "I've got to take some risk. I'm a going for the roof!"

He gave the fireboard a tremendous push, thinking to force it back along the pipe so as to leave room for him to crawl out into the room.

Instead of this the pipe parted. In flew the fireboard, carrying Dick with it, throwing him with great violence against a small cylinder stove, in which a fire burned.

Over went the stove, scattering the red hot coals in every direction, with poor Dick in the middle of them.

Bang! bang! bang! went the shots again,

and at the same instant the James Boys came rushing through the door which separated the two rooms."

"Fire! Fire!" yelled Dick, scrambling up, with his coat all ablaze.

"It's that blarsted boy, by Judas!" roared Jesse. "Don't stop, brother, or Brady will have us! Shoot him down, and make for the roof!"

Crack! Crack!

They dashed out into the hall, in their flight overturning Mother Mix, who appeared screaming wildly at the door.

"Help! Help! Oh, God, I'm shot!" yelled Dick, sinking to the floor.

"Jess, you blamed fool, what was the good in that? You've lost your last chance of getting the hoodie now!" he heard Frank James say to his brother as they dashed from the room.

CHAPTER XV.

OLD KING BRADY.

WHAT was the matter with Old King Brady?

Was he dead? Had the James Boys succeeded in sending a successful shot at the brave detective at last?

"Yes and no."

Thus far the shooting had been carried on through a door which the detective found himself powerless to force.

From both sides shots had been buried in its panels, in the hope that some one of them might take effect.

And one had done this.

It lodged in Old King Brady's arm, and spent though it was drew from him a cry of pain.

Following Mrs. Mix up-stairs the detective had located the brothers in the front room. The door of the back room was locked, and the firing began.

It had been principally from the inside, Old King Brady devoting his energies to bursting in the door.

Now at last he succeeded, and the door fell in with a crack, but too late. The birds had flown.

"Fire! Fire!" shouted Mother Mix, dashing wildly down the stairs.

The floor of the room was bursting into flames now, and in their midst lay Dick.

"Merciful God!" ejaculated the detective as he grasped the situation.

He seized Dick by the heels and dragged him into the hall. Tearing a blanket from the bed he rolled the boy in it and soon had extinguished his burning clothes.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" groaned poor Dick. "Don't leave me here, Mr. Brady. I'm dreadfully burned and I'm shot in the side too. Don't leave me to die!"

"Courage, my boy!" breathed the detective. "Courage! There is a chance for us yet."

He seized Dick in his arms and dashed up the ladder through the open scuttle, gaining the roof.

"They went this way?" he questioned eagerly.

"Yes, yes!"

"I must leave you and follow them! The scoundrels! They must be captured at any cost."

"Don't leave me! Oh, don't leave me!" moaned Dick.

"Not here! In the tenement. There is no danger. Even if this house burns to the ground it cannot set fire to this brick wall."

He sprang through the side window of the tenement to find himself in the midst of an excited knot of people, who had come rushing in terror from their rooms.

"Two men! Which way did they go?" demanded the detective of a sensible-looking Irishman who confronted them.

"Sure, I saw a big man running down-stairs wid a pistol in his fist!" was the excited reply, "but he was only wan."

"Take care of this boy! You need not leave the house—there is no danger."

"Jist what I'm a tellin' thim, sor," replied the man, taking Dick from the detective's arms.

"The bag—the money, Mr. Brady!"

"Yes, yes!"

"It is in——"

Dick said no more. His face was ghastly pale now, and his head sank back upon the Irishman's shoulder.

For a moment Old King Brady thought the boy was dead.

But he had only fainted.

The briefest kind of an examination told the detective that.

"Take care of him and send for a doctor," he said. "I can stay no longer."

And he went bouncing down the stairs.

Had he paused another moment he would have seen two things which would have interested him.

First a man, who glided from among the crowd which filled the passage and hurried after him down the stairs.

The man was Frank James.

Next a girl, who now appeared on the scene from out of one of the rooms.

"Dick! Oh, Dick! What has happened?" she cried, in agonized tones, upon catching sight of the boy.

The girl was Accordeon Kate.

But Old King Brady, unaware of what he had missed, hurried on and gained the street.

Here he found all excitement.

Already a crowd had begun to gather.

In front of the open door of the saloon stood Mother Mix, crying and wringing her hands.

Smoke and flames were pouring out of the windows above.

Before Old King Brady had reached the corner of Prince street the fire engines could be heard rattling to the scene.

He looked for the James Boys, but could see nothing of them.

He had scanned the faces of the crowd, questioning one or two hurriedly.

All he could learn was that a man crying fire had been seen running that way.

"It's all up!" thought the detective, in deep chagrin. "I'm beaten at every point. I'd better get back to the boy, and see what he knows about the bag."

He turned and found himself face to face with Frank James.

"Now, I've got you, Brady!" hissed the outlaw, fiercely. His face wore a wild, scared expression, as well as that of a man who was suffering pain.

As he moved back a step or two he seemed to totter, but his old nerve clung to him, and he whipped out his revolver and hanged away twice at Old King Brady's head, recording another miss.

Old King Brady barely made a movement to dodge the flying balls.

Fear he never felt—he could see only Frank's long face—think only of that.

He sprang upon him with all the fury of a tiger—flung one long arm about him, with the disengaged hand clutching his throat and throwing him down upon the sidewalk with a force which would have split the skull of an ordinary man.

The game is played, Frank James!" he breathed. "I've got you, and that's something. Drop that pistol! Drop it, I say!"

Frank breathed an imprecation and tried to fire even as he lay there. He might have succeeded had not the detective seized the weapon and wrenched it away.

"No, you don't," he hissed, running his hands over Frank's person and possessing himself of

another revolver and two wicked looking knives.

Now the crowd had begun to gather.

"It's Old King Brady, the detective!" cried one.

"He's caught the feller what set the fire!" shouted another.

"Give it to him! Don't let up on him, Brady! Blast his ugly phiz, he looks like a fire bug!"

These and similar cries were heard on all sides.

But Old King Brady scarcely heard, and certainly never heeded in the least.

The headquarters of the New York police were very near, and to do away with all possible risk of losing his prisoner, the detective resolved to drop all else and take Frank in at once.

"Get up!" he said, sternly.

"Wal, now I'm tew sicker man ter git up. Yer'll hev ter carry me," drawled Frank.

"Get up, I tell you!" repeated Old King Brady jerking him to his feet with a powerful twist.

He had no handcuffs, unfortunately. This he regretted but it could not be helped.

"Do you want any help?" asked several of the bystanders.

"No, no, I can manage him alone, said the detective, confidently.

He clutched Frank's arm as fearlessly as if he had been but a common pickpocket, and hurried him round the corner into Prince street.

But for their interest in the fire the bystanders might have followed; as it was they fell off one by one. Before half the block between Mott and Mulberry streets had been covered, Old King Brady found himself alone with his prisoner with only a few steps to go.

But why had he brought him this way at all? Why not have gone straight up Mott street and taken Frank into the big marble building by the back way?

Why, indeed!

Old King Brady could scarcely have told himself. It would have been far better had he done so. This move was destined to still further interfere with the fulfillment of his plans.

"Wal, now, you jest think you got me slick, don't yer?" gasped Frank, in tones of the deepest hatred. "Ef I wuzn't a tarnation sick man you'd never done it. Burn yer, Brady! Oh, how I'd like ter——"

"Don't think of it, my friend," interrupted the detective, who had begun to recover his usual calm demeanor. "At the slightest move I propose to shoot you as I would a dog!"

"We've hed a sample of yer shootin' to-night, Brady. Ef I wuz well that threat wouldn't scare me fer a cent."

"And of yours. But all that was different. Where's your brother, Frank James?"

"Blest ef I know," replied Frank with a shrug of the shoulders. "I was took with a pain when I jumped through that ar winder. I told Jess to light out and leave me, an' he lit."

"You've played a bold game. You'll swing for this!"

"No I won't nuther. No James was ever hung yet."

"Wait and see"

"Bet yer twenty ter one that I don't hang, Brady, but I want you to promise me one thing."

"What is it?"

"Don't let them send me to the penitentiary. I'd a blame sight rather swing. I'll confess ther hull bizness to you rather then hev to put on the zebra suit."

"You don't seem to value your life as highly as most people?"

"Don' know beout that. I'd rather die than be behind bars all my life. Hev we far ter go?"

"No, only a step."

"Hope ter blazes Jess'll make fer home."

"He can scarcely escape from the city," replied the detective, coolly. "For the past twenty-four hours my assistants, and they are keen ones too, have guarded every outlet. You ain't in Missouri now, Frank James."

"I should say not. I wish ter gracious I'd a put a shot into you when you wuz in thet thar chest, Brady. I was a fool to swallow Jesse's say so thet you was dead. Jumpin' at conclusions is played out with me from this day on."

"Jump for your life, though," spoke a voice behind them.

They were passing along by the low brick wall which surrounds the cathedral.

Unseen and unheard by either Frank or the detective, a tall man had dropped from the top of the wall and crept up behind them.

Before he spoke—even before Frank had finished his sentence—the man raised his clenched fist and dealt Old King Brady a furious blow upon the back of the head.

The detective dropped like a log, and Frank, starting back, beheld his brother at his side.

"Jess! Jess! Great snakes! Where'd you spring from?"

"Frank! Brace up, old boy. We've got him now. Did you think I'd give you the shake?"

Old King Brady, upon the icy sidewalk, never moved.

It seemed strange.

It had all happened within sight of the headquarters of the New York police force, and yet there they were alone.

The hour was very late—the fire had attracted the few belated pedestrians still on the streets.

Even now the steady grinding of the engine could be heard, and over the roofs on their left came a cloud of smoke and flame.

"Is he dead?" breathed Frank.

"Blame me ef I don't think he is, brother. I'll drop a shot into him, though, ef you say the word."

"No—no—no! You'll hev the hull street out. Listen, Jess. The boy—he knows where the hoodle is. There is jest one chance in a million that ef we work sharp and lose no time, we may get our paws onto it, yet."

"Yes, yes."

"Off with Brady's coat and hat. Here, Jess, help me."

"Don't see yer game," muttered Jesse, but he never lost a second in rendering his brother the asked-for help.

They tumbled Old King Brady over, but he showed no signs of life.

Frank now pulled off his own coat and dashed his hat aside, donning the detective's garment instead.

It could scarcely be said that he bore even the faintest resemblance to Old King Brady, yet there was the blue coat and the big white hat with a smooth-shaven face beneath. In the darkness it might have deceived for a moment one whose acquaintance with the detective was but slight.

"Tumble him over the wall," breathed Jesse, and the brothers seized the body of Old King Brady and without the slightest ceremony threw it over the cathedral wall.

"We hain't euckred yet, not by a whole jugger full of jugs," whispered Jesse, and he pulled Frank away. "Blame it all, but you do look like the detective. Wouldn't surpriso me a mite ef you deceived a blind man. Wouldn't surprise me amite ef wo held the joker in this leetle game after all."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE END OF IT ALL.

"Dick! Dick! Oh, Dick!" Kate Cohnschaster

had cried, at sight of our hero in his pitiable plight.

But how came Kate to be there in the tenebrous, when she had stated most positively that she was going straight home?

This was what puzzled Dick as his senses came flashing back after the brief fainting fit.

He felt almost as though it must be a delusion—that it was not Kate at all.

"Kate, is it really you?" he breathed. "Oh, my dear girl, this is a terrible end to it all!"

"Sure, an' if ye know the lad ye'd better take care of him," broke in the man who held Dick. "I don't know ye, though. Whose room are ye in?"

"Here, here!" exclaimed Kate, leading the way toward the end of the hall. "But can we stay here?" she added. "Oh, tell me, sir, is it safe?"

"Divil a fear, miss. The place next door is nought but an ould box. It'll be all burnt in two minutes."

Dick gave a groan as the man laid him in a bed.

Kate and an elderly woman were at his side, ready to help him all they could.

"We must have a doctor!" cried the girl.

"Dick, where were you hit?"

"In the left side."

"By the James Boys?"

"Yes. Oh, Kate, hadn't you better fly and save yourself. This house may burn."

"No, no," replied the woman. "Every one says there is no danger. I'll hurry for a doctor, Kate."

"She's my aunt—my mother's sister—and a blessed woman!" exclaimed Kate. "I felt too sick to go home, Dick, so I came here. I thank God I did, the way things have turned out."

Just then the lamp which stood on the bureau flashed and went out, leaving them no light except what came in over the transom from the hall.

It came flashing and told the story.

Mother Mix's house was all on fire now. Long tongues of flames were shouting up through the roof, and by the rush and roar on the street below, Kate knew that the engines were already on the ground.

"Dear me! What shall we do for light!" exclaimed the girl. "I suppose the lamp has burned itself out, and I don't know where auntie keeps her oil."

We don't want any more light than we've got, Kate. Stand one side, dear girl! I'm going to get off this bed."

"Stop, Dick, stop! You mustn't try."

"I must, Kate."

"You'll kill yourself. Oh, Dick, how dreadfully you have burned your face, and your hands, too. Do, do, lie down like a good boy, and keep quiet till the doctor comes."

"I can't do it, Kate. I hate to refuse you, but I can't. I must see Old King Brady right away."

"But Old King Brady has gone, Dick."

"Then I must find him. Kate! Kate! I tell you, Tony's bag with all the money inside is burning up in that house next door."

In his excitement Dick, poor fellow, had managed to get off the bed, and now tottered across the floor to a chair.

"I'm not so bad after all," he muttered.

"You'll kill yourself! That's what you'll do, Dick Wells!" cried Kate, in tears at the pitiable sight presented by the boy.

"No, no, I won't. I've been shot and I've been burned, and beside I crawled up through the chimney which had blackened me all over and makes my face look worse than it really is. Kate, it's not so bad."

"Is your wound very bad?" inquired Kate, in deep sympathy.

"That's what I want to find out. Would you mind stepping into the next room for just a moment till I see."

"But is it safe to leave you alone, Dick?"

"Yes, yes! Be quick, Kate. I'm going out into the street if I find my wound is not too bad."

Kate passed into the kitchen and closed the door.

With a great effort, Dick loosened his clothes and examined the spot where the shot had struck.

It was just below the last rib on the left side. To his intense relief, he found that there was nothing dangerous about it. The bullet had plowed its way through the flesh in a slanting direction, not penetrating his body, and was gone.

The mere fact of having made this discovery, seemed to give the boy new strength.

"Kate!" he called. "Kate!"

Kate came hurrying in.

"It's nothing, Kate!"

"Oh, I'm so glad! But your hands and face, Dick, they must hurt you horribly, and your clothes are all burnt to rags. For my sake, get back in the bed and lie quiet till the doctor comes."

"I can't and I won't, Kate. Oh, you don't know how bad I am. Do you know I actually was afraid for a moment that I'd run off with that money? Nothing but the thought of you kept me from it, Kate. I deserve all I've got."

"Dick, you wrong yourself—I'm sure you do."

"I don't. I'm going down-stairs now before it is too late. I must see what I can do."

But he did not.

When Dick tried to reach the door over he went in a dead faint again.

Kate managed to get him on the bed, and presently he revived.

Meanwhile the noise and excitement all about them was tremendous.

The firemen were in the hall attacking the blaze through the window. Some excited people on the floor above were recklessly throwing their household goods out of their windows, wild shouts rising from below as each article went down.

Moments passed.

Five—ten—fifteen—yes, twenty slipped by. Still the aunt did not return, nor the doctor come.

Dick was in agony.

"I s'pose the house has burnt down by this time," he said, dolefully, "and the money has gone with it. I shall be ashamed to look Old King Brady in the face after this."

"Rap—rap—rap!"

Just at this juncture a sharp knock sounded upon the door.

"The doctor at last!" cried Kate, hastening to open.

But no.

A tall man entered.

It was now quite dark in the room, for the flames from the burning house had died down.

Seen in the dimness both Dick and Kate took the man for Old King Brady, for he wore the well-remembered blue coat and the big white hat.

"Oh, I'm so glad you've come—so glad!" exclaimed Kate.

She yielded now to her long pent-up emotions and burst into tears.

"Is that boy Dick Wells here?" whispered the new-comer, speaking in a constrained voice.

"Yes, yes, here I am, Mr. Brady!" exclaimed Dick, sitting upon the bed.

The man closed the door, making the room even darker than it had been before.

"I've been shot in the throat and can hardly speak," he continued. "Are you much hurt, my boy?"

"I'm badly burned. I've been shot in the side, too, but I don't think that it is going to amount to much."

"You—you wanted to say something to me," pursued the man. I heard you say something about that bag."

"Yes, yes. I hid it in the beer saloon."

"Ha!"

"Yes."

"Too bad!"

"Is it too late then?"

"I'm afraid so."

"Is the place all burned up?" demanded Dick in despair.

"Not quite. The upper part is all gone though."

"The saloon—is that burned?"

"No."

"Is the fire out?"

"Yes, pretty much."

"Oh, let us go down quick! Perhaps we can find the bag."

"Where did yer put it?"

"I turned an empty soda water box over it, while I stood there in the darkness."

The man gave a curious grunt and moved toward the door.

Dick thought he heard him fumbling with the latch or the key—he could not tell which.

"Can you walk?" he whispered.

"Yes, yes. I'm sure of it."

"Don't go, Dick! Don't go! There's something wrong. This man is not Mr. Brady, I'm sure of it!" cried Kate.

"You will go though!" hissed the intruder, suddenly seizing Dick and dragging him to the door.

Before the boy could make the slightest resistance or Kate interfere, the man had dragged him out into the hall and turned a key in the lock fastening Kate in.

"Help! Help!" roared Dick. Kate was screaming wildly inside.

"Hold yer jaw or take this! yer blasted toad!" hissed Dick's captor, dragging him toward the stairs, at the same time thrusting the cold muzzle of a revolver in his face.

And now for the first time Dick got a square look at him.

It was Frank James, and there was Jesse waiting for them at the foot of the stairs.

Dick's heart sank within him.

Something of his former weakness returned. He gave himself up for lost.

There was no one else in the hall. The firemen had left. Every one seemed to have taken to the street.

"Come!" whispered Frank. "You'll show us whar yer put that bag jest. Jess, you light out. Tain't safe. It must all be did in a minute. Looker hyar, Dick Wells; I'm gwinter be generous an' let up on to you ef you keep quiet. Mind yer eye now. Ef you breathe one word I'll shoot yer, ef I hev to shoot myself next minute to keep from gettin' caught. Now, then, all depends upon yerself."

As Frank spoke Jesse glided through the door and vanished among the crowd.

Frank clutched Dick's arm tighter and hurried him into the street.

The crowd fell back before them. Beside the air of authority which the outlaw's movements wore, many supposed him to be old King Brady.

Even the policeman on guard who happened to catch a glimpse of his back only, was deceived.

Frank pushed his way into the saloon.

Here all was confusion. Firemen were rushing about, and an officer inside, deceived in the uncertain light, actually called Frank by the great detective's name.

What ailed Dick?

Had his courage deserted him?

Not that, but he seemed completely overpowered by the sheer strength of the outlaw's will.

"Where is it?" whispered Frank. "Be quick and remember."

Scarcely knowing what he did, Dick walked straight to an overturned box behind the bar and stopped.

"There!" he stammered.

Frank kicked over the box.

Sure enough, there was the black bag, unharmed.

Instantly the outlaw seized it, and darting a look of intense hatred at Dick, made for the door.

"Stop him! Stop him! He's a thief!" cried the boy, finding courage to speak at last.

But the cry was unnecessary.

Already the outlaw had met with a check.

From out of the crowd a tall, elderly man in his shirt-sleeves, with left arm hanging limp, had sprung upon him, and with his right wrenched the bag from Frank's hand.

Crack! Crack!

Bang! Bang!

Dick saw the crowd scatter like sheep as the sharp pistol reports rang out.

The last he knew the man in his shirt-sleeves, still clutching the bag, was dashing after the flying Frank up Mother Mix's steps, and then —

Why then Dick found himself lying upon a hospital cot, with Kate fanning his burning face vigorously and Old King Brady, looking calm and dignified, standing in his usual dress beside the bed.

"Kate! Mr. Brady!" breathed the boy, starting up.

"Thank God! He knows us at last!" he heard Kate say.

But Old King Brady stretched forth his hand and gently pushed him back.

"You must not think of moving," he said.

"The money—is it all safe?" breathed Dick.

"It is."

"The James Boys—have you captured them?"

"Unfortunately I have not."

Dick heaved a deep sigh, and closing his eyes sank off into a profound sleep.

* * * * *

Thus it all ended.

That sharp running fight between Old King Brady and the James Boys was done.

As before, it had only been a partial success.

The bag the detective managed to keep, but Frank made his escape in the crowd.

Shortly afterward he joined Jesse on the Bowery, and by thoroughly disguising themselves the brothers managed to give the detectives the slip, and the next morning saw them safe on the limited express bound West.

It had been a close run.

And it came near putting a period to Old King Brady's career.

But for the snow on the other side of the wall, matters might have been more serious. But, as it was, he fell into a drift which had banked itself up, and there consciousness, of which he had been temporarily deprived by Jesse's fist, speedily returned.

Finding himself deprived of his hat and coat, Old King Brady suspected Frank's ruse.

He acted upon the suspicion at once and, in spite of the agony of his wounded arm, hastened back to Mott street, just in time to meet his

double coming out of the saloon carrying the bag.

The rest we know, and there remains but little more to tell.

The stolen money was returned to the bank of East Meridian through the clearing house.

Although Old King Brady would have declined giving it up to the cashier in any case, he would not have been able to do so, for, when he came to look for Mr. Hart, he found that this pusillanimous individual had disappeared.

Afterward it transpired that, deserting his family, he had sailed for Europe.

There is but little doubt that he intended to steal the money and take it with him if it had come into his clutches, for it proved that his passage was already engaged.

Tony was arrested and sent to the island for drunkenness. After he came out he took himself off somewhere and was never seen again, much to the relief of Dick Wells.

For Dick is married now—to Kate of course.

Out of the \$5,000 which he received from the bank people, the detective generously gave Dick \$1,000, which enabled him to start a small express route of his own.

From that day forward Accordeon Kate never sang on the street.

Dick got over his burns nicely, and in due time Old King Brady's arm regained its accustomed strength.

Mother Mix sold out and left New York.

As for the James Boys they lived to commit many depredations and take part in many stirring adventures in their native wilds after that, for all this happened some years before Jesse's death at the hands of the notorious Fords.

But they never ventured East again; consequently this is all we have to say touching the adventures of THE JAMES BOYS IN NEW YORK.

[THE END]

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